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Updates for August 16th

2 Aug - Chelsea Manning featured in new Amnesty International book

An interview with Chelsea Manning is featured in Amnesty International's upcoming book Here I Stand, a collection of short stories and poems for young adults.

MORE:

Although the book is set to come out in a few days (August 4, 2016), Chelsea's chapter was originally written in 2015. Since then, Chelsea made an attempt on her life. She is currently under investigation by Army officials for charges relating to this attempt, and if charged she could face indefinite solitary confinement.

Here I Stand Chelsea Manning excerpt

You are one person, and the military and the government are so powerful. Through all this, have you ever felt afraid?

CM: I am always afraid. I am still afraid of the power of government. A government can arrest you. It can imprison you. It can put out information about you that won't get questioned by the public – everyone will just assume that what they are saying is true. Sometimes, a government can even kill you – with or without the benefit of a trial. Governments have so much power, and a single person often does not. It is very terrifying to face the government alone. Governments can easily become centered on themselves and their interests, at the expense of their people

Can you describe a moment when you have particularly felt this way?

CM: It's a very difficult feeling to describe. Not long after I was first detained by the military, I was taken to a prison camp in Kuwait, where I essentially lived in a cage inside of a tent. I didn't have any access to the outside world. I couldn't make phone calls. I didn't get any mail. I had very limited access to my lawyers. There was no television or radio or newspapers. I lost the sense of where in the world I was. The military had total control over every aspect of my life. They controlled what information I had access to. They controlled when I ate and slept. They even controlled when I went to the bathroom. After several weeks, I didn't know how long I had been there or how much longer I was going to be staying. It's an overwhelmingly terrifying feeling. I became very, very sad. At one point, I even gave up on trying to live any more.

Do you hope good will still come from your actions? What might this look like?

CM: This is a very difficult question to answer. I don't know. I don't even want to try and work it out. I am hopeful that people can gain more of an understanding of how the world operates. Across the world, governments can easily become centered on themselves and their interests, at the expense of their people.

I am also hopeful that, perhaps, the next time a democratic government thinks about committing military forces to the occupation of a country which is likely to lead to an insurgency, we can try and look back, and learn from the last time. War is a terrible thing, and this type of warfare is one of the worst. I hope that we can avoid getting excited about this kind of thing in the future.

You had some bad times in detention, particularly before your case went to trial. What is it like for you in prison now?

CM: I try to stay as active and productive as possible. I don't have access to the internet, but I read books and newspapers a lot. I work hard at the job that I have in prison – work with wood. I am also always trying to learn more, working on my education. I also exercise a lot. I run all the time! I do cardio exercises to stay in shape. I write a lot, too.

What helps you to stay positive in prison?

CM: I love reading the mail that I get from all over the world. I love talking on the phone with people I care about. I always feel so much better when people send me their warm love and strong words of support. I love staying active and engaged with the world. It is an amazing feeling!

August 10th - Chelsea Manning Supporters Demand Army End Punishment For Surviving Suicide Attempt

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

Supporters of United States military whistleblower Chelsea Manning and one of her defense attorneys demanded the Secretary of Army drop administrative charges brought against her. The charges stem from a suicide attempt while in prison at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.

Fight for the Future, Demand Progress, RootsAction, and Care2 circulated a petition and obtained over 115,000 signatures, which were delivered to the Secretary of Army this morning. They contend the Army is essentially punishing her for surviving her suicide attempt.

In addition to demanding administrative charges be dropped, the grassroots organizations urged the Army to provide Manning with adequate mental health treatment. The military currently refuses to allow Manning to grow her hair out, even though she is a transgender prisoner.

Chase Strangio, an ACLU attorney who represents Manning in her lawsuit against the Defense Department for failing to treat her gender dysphoria, said by bringing administrative charges against Manning the “government is doing everything to make her physical and mental health condition worsen.”

Manning could potentially find herself in solitary confinement indefinitely if she is found guilty of the administrative charges. She may also lose access to the phone and law library, which are “things that connect her to her supporters,” according to Strangio.

“This is a scandal, as I say, that must be corrected,” Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg declared. He urged the military to reverse course quickly.

Ellsberg suggested the military was “losing no opportunity to make an example of her.” It seemed designed to “cause her to break down.”

“I was stunned” to hear Manning attempted suicide, Ellsberg shared. However, he acknowledged it showed she was human. “She’s not after all superhuman.”

Yet, to Ellsberg, it was understandable that Manning was driven to commit suicide. She is a woman in an all-male prison for 30 or more years. She already suffered ten and a half months or so in solitary confinement, which is now seen as “cruel and unusual punishment and designed to make people go mad.”

Strangio contended there was a “certain degree of arbitrariness” to the process of bringing charges against her. It is unclear what will happen next, but it will more than likely follow a pattern similar to what Manning faced last year, when she was punished for having LGBTQ literature and expired toothpaste.

The Army will provide a more detailed charge sheet. A hearing will be scheduled, where Manning will appear. She will not be permitted to have legal counsel with her. There she will learn what specific consequences she will face. But she will not be court-martialed.

It is serious because the Army could extend the time before she is eligible for parole. Plus, Strangio added, the way the administrative charges are defined can “make almost anything an infraction.”

Manning’s administrative charges include resisting the force cell team, the prohibited use of property, and conduct that threatens the good order and discipline of the prison.

The most stunning aspect of the charges is that Manning is accused of resisting removal from her cell when she was unconscious. There is no way she could have put up a fight against a cell extraction team.

Manning’s defense does not know how previous suicide attempts have been handled by the prison, however, during her time in prison, Manning has been subjected to extraordinary surveillance and harassment. There is a history of systemic mistreatment and abuse that stretches back to the Marine brig at Quantico, where she was held in conditions of solitary confinement for a period of time. So, the “aggressive pursuit” of administrative charges feels unique to her, Strangio said.

While Manning cannot address the specific nature of the administrative charges brought against her, she has expressed gratitude to her supporters.

“I have been feeling a little better. Certainly better than the week before last, when I was first served with these charges,” Manning shared. “Your outpouring of support has been incredible. You have made a real difference in my feelings about myself and my situation.”

“One thing I’ve had to learn to remember is that there are thousands of people all over the world thinking about me every day. Knowing that does help me get through my day. It helps me to get up in the morning, and it helps me have the strength [to] go through this routine that has become my life,” Manning added.

Yet, currently, the mental health treatment available at Leavenworth is inconsistent, according to Strangio. There is an ongoing concern, “particularly in light of external forces,” like the charges, that she will continue to endure destabilizing effects on her mental health.

“Chelsea Manning is a human being, who deserves to be treated with basic dignity and respect,” stated Evan Greer, campaign director of Fight for the Future. “The U.S. government’s treatment of her will be remembered as one of the most shameful abuses of power in our nation’s history. Everyone who cares about human rights should be speaking out against this cruelty and injustice right now.”

Manning was convicted of offenses a little over three years ago. The charges stemmed from her decision to provide WikiLeaks with over a half million U.S. government documents and a video of an Apache helicopter attack in Baghdad, widely known as the “Collateral Murder” video. She exposed war crimes, diplomatic misconduct, and other instances of wrongdoing and questionable acts by U.S. officials. She is serving a 35-year sentence at Fort Leavenworth.

3 Aug - Informants and Information: Looking at the Green Scare and Surveillance with Lauren Regan

The following interview originally appeared in Black & Green Review #3.

MORE:

As an attorney and long-term activist Lauren Regan has a vantage on state and corporate surveillance that few other activists are exposed to. Regan is the founder and Executive Director of the Civil Liberties Defense Center based in Eugene, OR. She has an extensive history of defending activists after inevitable run ins with the law. She represented a number of Green Scare defendants and has arguably spent more time sorting through Green Scare, AETA, and other similar cases to know about the extent of government and corporate surveillance, disruption, provocation, and how failures of Security Culture opened the door for them.

What has been one of your more profound encounters with informants within radical action communities?

After moving to the Pacific Northwest I became involved with forest defense campaigns, and ultimately ended up doing a lot of legal support for my friends. Several years later Lacey Phillabaum was one of my housemates for a short time period. Then in December 2005 a bunch of my friends, fellow activists and clients were arrested as part of the Green Scare. Lacey came to me, freaking out that she was being asked to become an informant, and that Stan (Stanislas “Stan” Gregory Meyerhoff) had become an informant.

I told her that we would try and support her in whatever she needed to avoid being in that situation. The next thing I know her and her father are meeting with me and informing me that they are about to go and meet with the FBI, and she was going to become an informant.

That was that, I thought. But a couple of years later I’m on Briana Waters’ legal team and we’re going to trial for the first time, and she’s facing life in prison with a 2 year old baby, and Lacey Phillabaum is testifying against her to try and put her away so that Lacey could get less time in prison. I’m sitting at the legal table watching the direct examination by the U.S. Attorney’s Office and all of a sudden Lacey points me out, sitting at the counsel table, and said “Lauren Regan knew what we were doing, or she should have known.” She perjured herself and basically tried to get me indicted.

Luckily it didn’t work.

When Lacey and her father met with you was that as a lawyer potentially representing her, or just as a personal friend?

No, it was as a lawyer who was a friend of hers at the time.

The day that the Green Scare bust happened, me, Jim, Lacey and Stan and a few other of our friends were all flying to Costa Rica for a friends’ wedding. Jim and I and several other friends were already in Costa Rica when Stan got detained at the airport on the way out. Lacey started calling me in Costa Rica freaking out, and there was not much I could do at that time. But I remember she read me the names of all the people who had been detained, and that really scared me because there were names on that list that I could not believe would have been involved in economic sabotage at this level.

So I thought conspiracy – this is a witch hunt – this was a broader net than it needed to be. Primarily it was Daniel McGowan’s name that surprised me the most because he worked very closely with me on Jeff

Luer's appeal and prison support campaign. So the idea that he would be Jeff's #1 support, and so close to being indicted himself seemed reckless. I thought there's no way Daniel is involved in this, but clearly he was.

As someone who lived with Lacey do you feel that there was behavior or personality traits that you feel made it not surprising that she eventually went down that path?

No, and here's why. Lacey was one of the most militant, hardcore security culture nazis in our town. When people were subpoenaed to the grand jury she would be standing outside the door with a pad of paper trying to be the community scribe of everything that was asked and everything that was said, and if you didn't fully debrief with her you were persona non grata.

If you disobeyed the militant culture of security culture as people pretended to adhere to it, she was down your throat in a second. So for her to just fold like a house of cards upon the first application of pressure, that was surprising.

She had been together with Stan for a while – a couple of years maybe – and they had this awful relationship. He punched her in the face a couple of times. They were just nasty to each other. In my head I thought, here's another smart woman who is so insecure in herself that she's with this piece of shit guy. She was leagues above him in many respects.

I wondered "why are they staying together?" She's living with me, and he is coming over occasionally, and he's as dumb as a piece of toilet paper. Whenever he would come over to my house I would remember he would often ask "How is Jeff (Luers) doing?" Jeff is in prison at this point, and I just assumed that because so many people knew I was Jeff's lawyer and lots of people who weren't really in the scene would approach me and ask "How's Jeff doing?", so I never thought anything about it that Stan was asking about Jeff.

Of course in hindsight I realized that Stan was involved in the Romania #2 arson (Jeff was charged with Romania #1, and Romania #2 occurred on the day Jeff's trial was supposed to begin in the same town the arsons occurred. Romania #2 is suspected of playing a part in the Court imposition of his original 23 year sentence) and had tremendous guilt over Jeff's sentence.

So at some point Lacey told me that her and Stan were moving to Bend, OR. At the time, to be frank, I thought it was a domestic violence maneuver. That he wanted to get her out of town. But even when she moved to Bend occasionally we would go hiking together and things like that.

Was it an intense experience realizing that a long term friend, someone you had lived with, gone on hikes with, could fold so easily?

Yeah, of course. It was the first time in my life, as well as many other people's lives around me, where we had to write off friends as if they were dead. We were burying people left and right. People who cooperated with the grand jury, people like Lacey, we lost a dozen humans out of our community forever. That was like a mourning process.

And if that had been it, that would have been tolerable. But when she actually tried to take me down in addition to it, that's when I got mad. That's why people in this community that have remained friends with her unfortunately can no longer be friends with me either.

She's very smart, and was a journalist so she's very good with words. Both of her parents are lawyers, she was a debate captain, so she can be very good at persuading people. She can be both effective and dangerous. It was a big loss to the movement to lose her in this way, potentially over a guy too. Because if Stan hadn't squealed, I don't think she would have had any reason to. I think the reason she became an informant was because he completely snitched her out, then she basically wanted to stand with him.

That brings up an interesting issue that I don't think many people talk about, in terms of intimate relationships and how often those are related to situations where people end up informing, or there are informants that get into relationships with people and then snitch on them. Do you feel like that's a recurring enough theme that it's something that we should be thinking and talking about more?

I think human frailty and human dysfunction on all sorts of levels become a huge problem whenever you're dealing with high stakes security culture issues. Whether it's drug addiction, or whatever it happens to be, there's always issues like that which come up.

Within the Green Scare you had Darren Thurston jumping off the non-cooperation ship, as a result of pressure from Chelsea Gerlach, who was his romantic partner at the time. And Chelsea was specifically attempting to flip people so she could get bonus points from the Feds. She met with many of the non-cooperators to try and get them to flip. So there certainly were a few examples of that within the Green Scare.

On the other hand there are examples to the contrary, like Joyanna and Nathan, who were a couple who stuck together and did not snitch. I can see it going both ways.

On the other hand, it is my understanding that Jennifer Kolar (Green Scare cooperating defendant), who dated REDACTED (indicted in Green Scare, never apprehended) and Jonathan Paul (Green Scare non-cooperating defendant) at different times, flipped her blonde hair around and wiggled her way into very critical areas of the movement primarily because she was having sex with activist men. She was probably not vetted as she should have been. She not only flipped as soon as it hit the fan, but she gave up all the passwords and technology related things that ended up being very bad, damning evidence against a lot of different people.

Have there been any other examples aside from "Anna" (who entrapped Eric McDavid) that you know of, of the FBI or corporate security actually sending people in to have relationships with activists?

Oh yeah. There are a number of proven situations where I've read the FBI reports myself where men have been targeted with female FBI agents that posed as interested parties for the purposes of infiltrating.

In my experience it's been men targeted by women. Although I know in Europe and other places it's definitely been the other way. And certainly with Peg Millet (one of the 'Arizona 5' accused of conspiracy to sabotage nuclear power plants and destroying power lines) and her fellow activists in Arizona, it was the reverse, with a male being sent in to infiltrate.

In my experience since the late 90s, I think female agents are used more often because there are more men in the direct action oriented frame of environmental and animal rights stuff, and younger men with a lot of testosterone that are very vulnerable to that type of thing; and statistically more men were committing acts of direct action, that it made a lot of sense for the FBI to be targeting men with women.

How do you think the Green Scare has impacted the green anarchist/radical scene?

From traveling around the country and doing a lot of government repression types of talks, that integrate AETA and Green Scare related issues, I have certainly had a lot of people both long term activists and newer ones tell me that things have been different since the Green Scare. That things are not as active since the Green Scare.

I think that may statistically be true in terms of economic sabotage, but in terms of the grassroots movements—anti-tar sands movement and some of the climate justice groups that are now including undocumented immigrant communities and things like that, I don't see there being a huge deterrent to people getting active along those lines, at least in the last 5-7 years or so.

In discussions I've had with people they say that the Green Scare had an impact because we're not seeing arsons anymore, but I think that the reality was that after that binge during the late 90's and early 2000s, even people who were participating in those actions were having some serious reconsideration about the way the tactic was being implemented, and the potential for serious back lash. As well as some serious discussion going on about the effectiveness of it. Things were being rebuilt, like Vail (Ski resort in Colorado where \$12M arson occurred). There were very few examples, Cavel West Slaughterhouse being one of them, where the target was not rebuilt. In nearly every other circumstance, the targeted property was rebuilt or repurchased. So I think there was a lot of internal discussion, and it was valid, and I think, a necessary discussion. So it's hard to say whether or not the underground movement itself put limits to that, versus it actually being government deterrence. By the time the [Green Scare] prosecutions happened in 2005 the actions had already pretty much stopped. Most of them stopped in 2001, and I think there was 1 or 2 that happened in 2003. Then the indictments didn't come down till 2005. So to say that the prosecutions were a direct result of ending that tactic, I'm not sure that factually plays out.

The FBI has been teaching very real world methods of observation, tracking and intrusion for a long time, but are using more high-tech surveillance these days. Is it likely that they are still using those 'real world' techniques?

Oh of course. As part of the FBI/JTTF training they are using younger agents who are tattooed, who learn vegan-talk, who basically go to boot camp to specifically be able to integrate themselves into anarchist / activist scenes. That is absolutely still going on. The ability for the government to spy on activists has only exponentially increased. In addition to government surveillance we are also seeing an increase in 'gray intelligence' – corporations spying on campaigns. Particularly in the anti-coal, tar sands, pharmaceutical – you know – environmental and animal rights targets, climate justice targets, all have very big industries behind them and we're seeing a lot of both illegal and legal spying tactics by them as well.

So you think corporate surveillance is definitely on the increase?

Oh yes.

Do you know some examples of how people are finding out about that? Because you wouldn't think it would come up on public records very often.

Well believe it or not, some of the private spy agencies screwed up by voluntarily sharing their reports with the FBI and local law enforcement agencies. Once they did that, all of those reports are subject to FOIA and public records laws, and that's how we actually got a lot of the stuff out.

For example, TransCanada was giving powerpoint presentations to FBI offices and local law enforcement agencies along the [Keystone] pipeline route. We actually got their whole powerpoint presentation, which

included photos of lead organizers, and all of the federal terrorist crimes that they were encouraging local DA's to use against activists, and things like that. Some of it we actually got through their own stupidity.

But there are lots of things that they can do that would be really difficult to catch them on, particularly electronic surveillance. A lot of the gray spies are former FBI agents, and so there is a real muddy zone of old and new buddying up with each other. Old FBI calling up new FBI and saying "hey, do me a favor and run this through the computer."

What information do you think informants and undercover types are particularly after? What is their core aim in terms of the information that they are gathering?

Well I think from the government's perspective one of the main goals is psychological profiling, and attempting to map movements and activist communities for future targeting. I think that is a huge part of the goal. I think a lesser part of the goal is actually trying to stop and fight crime...

Or sometimes create crime...

Right, right. Especially I think in a post-Green Scare world where now, because of the level of disclosures that were made by all of these ELF and ALF underground cell operants, the feds are now very aware of how underground activists work. I think that akin to the COINTELPRO era, another major interest of the government in using spies and infiltrators is just the mere interruption of political activity that challenges the current social structures.

There are FBI anti-terrorist reports that I have read where they specifically say that anti-capitalist activism is one of the hugest threats to American society, and that is because of the buddy relationship between the government and these giant corporate profiteers. It's the government doing the bidding of these giant industries and corporations, so anything that is a direct challenge to that is not only being spied upon, but anyway that they can interrupt, interfere, malign – you know – they don't want that movement to build.

Sometimes it's not about trying to prosecute anyone at all, it's basically about trying to divide up a community and interfere with successful campaigns. We see it over and over again. But because this is a big country and a big activist community we don't really talk as much as we should be able to see that a certain thing happened in the Tar Sands campaign, and this is happening in the wolf campaign, and the same thing is happening here and there. What is the common situation that is going on? A lot of times it is that the government understands, from its past spying, how easy it is to fuck with most activist communities.

Again, because of the human weakness, because we don't learn our history and we continue to repeat it. We don't take ourselves as seriously as we should as movement activists. The government preys on all of that and has the same playbook that they play out all across the country over and over again. Every couple of years they can come back and it's a new batch of activists and they can do the same thing again.

Speaking of which, why does security culture matter?

Security culture, in my mind, is not primarily about how to get away with criminal activity. It is about creating an environment and community where those that don't want to engage in criminal activity can be safe from grand jury subpoenas or aiding and abetting, or conspiracy charges as well. So security culture is an across the board agreement on how political activists – who are the targets of government and other kinds of repression – can be as strategically effective as possible and create safe boundaries for people, as best as they can.

A long term activist did a FOIA request that came up with some interesting information about how pre-9/11 environmentalists were being targeted on as potential users of WMD's. Do you know if there was any exposure of informants or spies in that program / investigation?

The incendiary devices that were used in the mid-late 90's were considered deadly devices, and that's why the terrorist enhancement stuck for a lot of the Green Scare defendants. But over and over again we see documentation from FBI agents, as well as corporate spies. For example, there is an anti-fracking group in Pennsylvania, and it's made up of teachers and doctors, and once a week on Friday afternoon they get out their banner and go down to the busy corner of this little town and they stand there and hold their anti-fracking banner. A corporate spy had been monitoring them, and had been writing a terrorist bulletin that they shared with law enforcement and the FBI, which is how we ended up getting it. The bulletin repeatedly said "they're holding a banner and they're doing this non-violence stuff now, but their rhetoric is getting more militant and they are going to move onto more violent activity, so we need to continue to monitor them...."

I think that generally speaking, law enforcement, in order to ensure the longevity of their jobs, and the continued funding, and gross increases in funding, there has to constantly be a threat and an increasing threat. You're never going to see the government saying "environmentalists learned their lesson, they're not going to do that stuff anymore." In the Green Scare they said "they may be doing property damage now, but they were going to be moving onto assassinations."

I assume that's enhanced so much more with corporate surveillance and private security agencies, which are so focused on helping drive profit growth?

The way a lot of them work, say Peabody Coal for instance, they know they can't have in-house spies. Because if that gets back to them, they get in trouble. So they set up and fund a separate private entity that is half-PR firm and half-security firm. In order for that entity to remain operational they have to produce information that Peabody Coal wants to hear, and they have to be validating their own job. So if they were to report "doctors and teachers are holding a banner every Friday" they are going to be pulled off that case, and they're not going to get paid to do that anymore. What retired FBI agent doesn't want to just sit around and watch a bunch of peaceniks hold a banner, versus going after drug smugglers or something similar. They are perpetuating their own economic gain through that process as well.

One of the more classic examples is the private spy group that changes its name every other week that targets PETA on behalf of the Ringling Brothers and big pharma. They literally had spies employed by PETA and stole computer files, and things like that.

A huge issue though is the extent that activists are making the government and private spy's jobs so easy by using facecrack or email to put the most dirty laundry of movement participants out into these public domains. They are basically giving them clear road maps of where vulnerable targets for government repression might be located, or who might be more likely to be a snitch or an infiltrator.

For me personally whenever I see some of that stuff happening I am really suspicious of the sources of it. It seems unbelievable to me that someone who calls themselves an activist, and has any level of education about what being a political activist means, would originate or perpetuate that type of thing in the public sphere. That's not to say that I don't think that in certain circumstances a community shouldn't go to someone's house and do an intervention, or have some kind of accountability process. But that accountability process should never ever be over facecrack, or computers at all. The idea that everybody gets to vicariously watch somebody get tarred and feathered is ridiculous. Watch the Kardashians on TV if

you want that level of drivel. If you live across the country and you're not involved in that campaign, you don't get to be a part of the accountability process. The gossip loving nature of the fallible human just seriously gets in the way.

Rather than being worried about spies and surveillance we really need to take ourselves a lot more seriously. People pay lip service to security culture and then they get on facecrack and act as if the concept doesn't exist. It's more than just a cool phrase while you're drinking beers with your friends. It really does mean things to people, and those that don't take it seriously aren't taking themselves seriously either.

A lot of times when people do air dirty laundry on social media they use the rhetoric of "I'm just trying to keep people safe by letting them know this information about this person." But if you bring up the safety of security culture it's completely dismissed.

That's right. There's a way you can keep a community safe without doing that mass distro-style thing. I remember there was a person who we outed as a federal infiltrator. He was a drug convict who was working his punishment off by trying to spy on environmental activists. He stole money from an environmental campaign and caused a bunch of problems and divisions. The way we were actually able to out him was after a couple of people ended up getting federally prosecuted, I found in the discovery that I received from the US Attorney's Office all the receipts for this guy's reimbursements and his daily log notes. They had inadvertently turned it over to me. They quickly realized their mistake and asked me to return them, but I had already given them to the clients, so it was already out there. So he got outed and then we heard that he fled town. But someone had some understanding that he was actually headed up to the Buffalo Field Campaign. We were able to call them, and I remember I faxed a black and white photo of the person to them, and said "hey this person may be heading in your direction, keep your eyes out." And they did, and they were able to shoo him on. The idea that some mass dissemination is the only way to keep communities safe is ignorant.

It seems to be a huge reflection on the very sudden change in our communications, with social media having become so central. A lot of people have grown up with that now, and understand it as the norm.

In doing teen 'Know Your Rights' trainings that we've been doing it's clear that this new generation has been reared with metal detectors and no sense of privacy at all. They don't understand what a right to privacy is, and why someone would be up in arms about that at all. They are so acclimated to a big brother, and nothing being private ever, that that's going to be the new cultural norm eventually. Which is exactly what the government has indoctrinated people to adhere to.

They have been extremely successful in that. Do you have any thoughts on how you resist that? Do you just keep off social media?

It's going to be so hard because of course mass media and the giant systems that have been set up, like facecrack, are reaching millions and millions of people. Not only in the US, but around the world. Our 'Know Your Rights' trainings, or any kind of political education, are not taught in the public schools. There's such a tiny minority of youth that will even be exposed to any semblance of this, that I don't have a lot of optimism. I think the only way that it could be really seriously reversed is if there is some major political upheaval that occurs.

4 Aug - Marius Mason allowed to begin hormone treatment

Marius allowed to begin hormone treatment! We're also including a new poem, "It's Like Aesop Said (an Election Year Cautionary Tale)" by Marius.

MORE:

Oh these silly frogs, all day long they cry
God tossed back His head, annoyed, with a sigh
They pray for a King and don't want to be free
What shall I do for them, why can't they see?
A King is a dangerous thing
To have or to be
An idea came to Him then, with a smile
Alright, alright, He shouted down to them, just wait a while
I'll make you a 'leader', let this praying be shushed!
Now get out of the way, or else you'll be crushed
From the high vaults of heaven, dropped the prodigious log
Crashing into the waters of the little frogs' bog
It settled, all sturdy, a place in the sun
And the frogs all jumped up to sit, one by one
An evil-eyed pike cruised the shadows and pouted
I can't get you up there, not at all, he shouted
With a flick of his tail, he swam away fast
The little frogs sighed, safe and happy at last
But quickly grew bored, as little frogs do
Oh this log is no King! It can't say what to do!
Their cries rose to Heaven and managed to reach
God's angry ears, and a lesson He'd teach
Oh very well, I will send you a King
One made in Hell, I guess that's the thing!
Enough of your whining, your foolishness dooms you
Here comes your King, you deserve him to rule you!
A black silhouette blocks the sun and the glade
And the frogs all look up from their place in the shade
An imperious heron, a beak sharp as a blade
Feathered pompadour floating, with tons of pomade
Has come to be King of the frogs

5 Aug - Support Political Prisoner Sundiata Acoli's Ongoing Legal Appeals

A certiorari petition has been filed in the United States Supreme Court and that filing involved legal fees, printing and filing costs. Please know and understand that all of your support is so much appreciated and needed as we continue to work towards Sundiata's release.

MORE:

A New Jersey Appellate Court in September 2014 ordered the release of Sundiata, resting its decision on the eligibility requirements under the New Jersey Parole Act of 1979. The decision left us overjoyed and at the same time, cautious as the State announced it would appeal the decision and request a "Stay" of the release until the appeal was heard. The "Stay" was granted which resulted in Sundiata remaining incarcerated while awaiting a decision from a New Jersey Supreme Court.

Arguments were heard on October 13, 2015 and on February 23, 2016, the Supreme court of NJ reversed the Appellate Court's order. The court did not rule on the merits of the Appellate case ordering release, but focused rather, on procedure. The Supreme Court held that the Appellate Court exceeded its authority in ordering release because a procedural process had not been followed- in New Jersey the full parole board has to make a decision in cases involving murder convictions. Sundiata appeared before the full board in June, 2016 and again, denied parole. An appeal will again be taken to the same Appellate Division that ordered his release.

He will be 80 years old on January 14, 2017!

It is most respectfully requested that everyone continues to exercise discretion and discipline in not making what could be interpreted as inflammatory remarks on social media or elsewhere. I know all of us who love and support Sundiata will want no reason for a denial of parole when this case again comes before the New Jersey Appellate Court- the court that issued a strong order that Sundiata must be released in accordance with the NJ parole Act of 1979. Sundiata has continued his positive actions since that decision.

Further, do understand that as much as we would like to keep supporters and friends abreast of what is going on with the case, it is not in Sundiata's best interest to expose each and every detail and legal strategies. We will all celebrate his freedom when he is released, but until then we will exercise restraint.

Please make checks/money orders payable to: Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign (or SAFC)

Mail to:

Florence Morgan
120-46 Queens Boulevard
Kew Gardens, New York 11415

8 Aug - 'I Am a Revolutionary and an Optimist': Former Black Panther

Please take the time to read this news article about Jalil Muntaqim.

MORE:

by Breno Altman (*Opera Mundi*)

"I lost all hope that Black people could fight without resorting to self-defense," said Muntaqim.

Attica Correctional Facility became famous for a bloody rebellion in September 1971.

The inmates took over the prison located in northwestern New York and took 42 staff members hostage. The state police, under the command of Governor Nelson Rockefeller, broke into the prison, acting ruthlessly.

When the battle ended, the dead bodies of 33 prisoners and 10 guards, as well as countless injured prisoners, littered the courtyards and the cells.

The uprising was caused by the murder of Black activist George Jackson, imprisoned in San Quentin, California, two weeks earlier. A trail of penitentiary uprisings served as a response to this prison guard brutality.

Attica also continued to be, over time, one of the main destinations for activists linked to the Black Panthers and other revolutionary organizations.

Nowadays it houses only one of these militants: Anthony Bottom, renamed Jalil Muntaqim when he converted to Islam in the early 1970s.

Announcing his name, in the identification counter, provokes tense, though soundless, laughter among the attendants. The guard that leads the reporter into the prison, however, can't keep it to himself. "Did you come to interview the cop killer?" he gently pokes. "Be careful, the guy seems to be nice, but he's very dangerous."

The rest of the walk up to a wide visitors salon was covered in silence, broken only by the instructions on how the interview would work and some comments on how the prison is organized.

Muntaqim would appear two hours later. The meeting was delayed, as would be expected, due to a brief rebellion in the wing where he is serving his time.

He was dressed in a white polo shirt and a white cap, moss-green trousers. Not even the grizzly beard reveals his 64 years of age, masked by permanent physical exercise and a broad smile that pushes away the idea of suffering.

But the records are merciless: he has been incarcerated since he was 19 years old, almost half a century ago, by far longer than Mandela and other legendary sentenced leaders. The only one who beats his time in jail is Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, who has been living in prison since September 1969.

Great-Grandfather

"When I was arrested, my girlfriend was three months pregnant and today I'm a great-grandfather," he recalls in a cheerful way, more like an achievement than a regret.

He went through all the maximum-security state prisons, in addition to spending a few years in jail in California.

His most serious charge was the killing of two New York police officers during a shooting in May, 1971 along with Albert Washington, now deceased, and Herman Bell, also imprisoned since then.

He was sentenced to life, but with the right to request parole after 25 years.

He ended up having to wait more than 30 more years for the opportunity to this benefit, having been transferred to San Francisco due to a process that ended after nearly five years, in a deal with no time to serve.

He could have been out since 2002 but his parole application was denied eight times. Whenever a hearing for his criminal progression is scheduled, the police officers' association mobilizes itself against it, recruiting the victims' families and calling for support from the more conservative press, adding to the prosecution and the direction of the penitentiary system.

"The state is vindictive," says Muntaqim. "The goal is to demonstrate that any act of rebellion in the United States will be crushed and never forgotten."

The prosecution's main witness, a Black Panther militant named Ruben Scott, incriminated Muntaqim and his companions after intense torture. After the first trial, that fact was revealed. Still, his testimony was revalidated and the request for a new trial was denied.

Statements of other three people, according to the defense of the accused, would also have been extracted under pressure.

A FBI ballistics report determined that the weapon with which Muntaqim was arrested in San Francisco was not the one that had been allegedly used in the killings of which he was accused. It was substituted by another report, from the NYPD, which offered an opposite conclusion, and disappeared from the court process during the appeal.

Behind the Scenes

Records currently belonging to the archives of the Richard Nixon Library, who was the U.S. president from 1968 to 1974, reveal a little bit of the backstage of that moment.

Among the audiotapes, there is a record of a meeting in the White House, five days after the murders in New York, in which the case is nicknamed NEWKILL. Amid the attendees were the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, and the U.S. president, accompanied by national security advisers.

The president orders the federal police to solve the crime, despite its local character. Many suspect that the guidance given was to take advantage of the episode, as others in the same period, to strike the Black Panthers and lead its members to jail.

Thus began Jalil Muntaqim's prison saga.

Born in Oakland, California, he came from a middle class family. His father was a computer programmer. His mother, a secretary, participated in the civil rights movement and had Martin Luther King Jr's pacifism as her compass.

"My parents were followers of non-violence and criticized the more radical groups," he recalls with humor. "The elderly were part of the Black nationalist bourgeoisie."

This social condition allowed him to have a good education. He completed his elementary education as a grade A student, earning a scholarship to a high school very well known for its math and science curriculum.

One of his mentors was John Carlos, the 200-meter champion at the Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968, whose picture with his fist raised, alongside his colleague Tommy Smith, would become a legendary image for the anti-racist resistance.

At eighteen, already engaged in the struggle for civil rights, he joined the San Jose State University engineering school.

He became one of the spokesmen of the Black Student Union and dedicated himself to social work in underserved communities.

His ideas would be shaken, as those of many young people of his generation, on April 4, 1968, when Luther King was victim of a deadly shooting in Memphis, Tennessee.

"I lost all hope that Black people could fight without resorting to self-defense, without responding to police's and racist group's violence," he recalls. "I hadn't yet turned 17, but I decided to enroll myself in the Black Panthers, to my mother's dismay."

Muntaqim would go beyond that, actually. Little more than a teenager, he agreed to join the armed wing of the organization that would later be known as the Black Liberation Army.

"Our role was to guarantee the party's headquarters' safety, combat drug dealers in Black neighborhoods, face the police and obtain funds through bank expropriations," he explains, with large gestures and a paused voice, being careful with his words. "There was a war going on and we had the right to act with the same resources as our enemies".

Prison

The times of freedom would end on Aug. 28, 1971, when he was detained for attempted murder of a police officer in San Francisco, during a confrontation typical of a period when the repression aiming the Black Panthers was being intensified.

He was arrested with Washington and Bell, the three quickly became the perfect choice for the FBI and the New York police, to be held responsible for the crime that had occurred three months earlier.

Nearly five decades went by.

Having spent more than twice of his life in prison than he spent on the streets, Muntaqim graduated in psychology and sociology, before the university education program was cut off for detainees sentenced to life.

He also wrote novels, essays and poems, some of them collected in the book "Escaping the Prism, Fade to Black," released in August 2015.

More than anything, however, he dedicated himself to fighting for the rights of prisoners, in and out each jail he was sent to. He received numerous punishments, usually long periods of solitary confinement.

With his letters and manifestos, he soon became the main supporter of the solidarity movement towards political prisoners in North America. An appeal signed by Muntaqim led to the Jericho March in 1998, when thousands of activists protested in front of the White House against this cursed inheritance of the rebel years.

"I made an effort to build an existence in prison, keeping myself politically active in any way possible," he says. "Prison makes you figure out your weaknesses and know better your enemy. You learn to survive through the worst situations, to be patient and determined."

13 Aug - Janye Waller Transferred...Again

Bad news: Janye has been TRANSFERRED ...again. He is now in Susanville at the California correctional center.

MORE:

Good news: Janye is eligible for 33% (3rd) time and is able to take classes to work more time off his sentence. He's also gets phone access.

Thank you everyone for your continuous support, it won't be long now. We still need donations! Janye is expected to pay restitution so please keep looking out.

Write him at:

Janye Waller BA2719
California Correctional Center
Post Office Box 2210
Susanville, California 96127

14 Aug - Peltier Week 2016

With the clock ticking before Mr. Obama leaves office and Leonard Peltier's bid for clemency hanging in the balance, we need your help like never before.

MORE:

Please help the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee fund a series of events in Washington, DC, late this year. We should be able to easily reach our goal if you each pitch in just \$10.00.

This is your opportunity to make a huge difference for Leonard Peltier. Please make your tax-deductible donation at www.whoisleonardpeltier.info now (and please don't assume someone else will). Alternatively, mail your check or money order made payable to the ILPDC to P.O. Box 24, Hillsboro, OR 97123.

Please also widely share this fundraiser (the Plumfund campaign for Peltier Week in DC at <http://www.plumfund.com/crowdfunding/2016-Peltier-Week-DC>).

Now, as always, thank you for all you do on behalf of Leonard Peltier and his freedom.

20 Aug - Remembering our Political Prisoners

WHAT: Black August Fundraiser for Panther Political Prisoners

WHEN: 4:00-9:00pm Saturday, August 20

WHERE: The Martin Luther King Labor Center - 310 West 43rd Street New York

COST: \$25

20 Aug - Prison Strike Letter Stuffing Party by IWOC

WHAT: Envelope stuffing

WHEN: 6:00-8:00pm, Saturday, August 20

WHERE: The Base – 1302 Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11221 (directions below)

NOTE: The Base is on the ground floor, is wheelchair accessible, and has a gender neutral toilet.

COST: FREE

MORE:

A new chapter has dawned in the fight against the American plantation: the self-organization of those behind prison walls. This new chapter brings the tactics of labor and anarchism to the fight against mass incarceration – the direct descendant of American chattel slavery. We are facing an updated system, codified by the 13th amendment, in which predominately poor and black and brown bodies are captured and used (or simply relegated to a slow death of boredom) for the profits of capital and the further stability of the white-supremacist state.

This fresh turn in tactics is a new opportunity to build power and solidarity between those behind prison walls, and those on the outside who cannot be free until all are free.

So, this month we will be reaching out to incarcerated workers producing products for CORCRAFT an evil company that contracts prisoners to create cheap goods for the state, including (seriously!!) the courtroom benches! Come through and help build for the Sept 9th nation-wide prison strikes!

Join IWOC (the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee), an organization devoted to organizing all people inside and their communities outside to fight abusive conditions in prison, and harassment on the street.

We'll be continuing our work reaching out to people currently incarcerated across the state of NY.

All materials provided, just bring yourself!

4 Sept - Running Down the Walls 2016

WHAT: Running Down the Walls – 5k Run/Walk/Jog/Bike

WHEN: 2:00-7:00pm, Sunday, September 4th

WHERE: Prospect Park– Lincoln Road/East Lake Drive, east of the Terrace Bridge (see the below map for exact location)

COST: Prospect Park– Lincoln Road/East Lake Drive, east of the Terrace Bridge (see the below map for exact location)

MORE:

Every year, prisoners and supporters of political prisoners organize solidarity events with Running Down the Walls. In the last few years, we've had runs in Albuquerque (NM), Arcata (CA), Ashland (OR), Bellefonte (PA), Boston (MA), Denver (CO), Elmore (AL), Inez (KY), Los Angeles (CA), Marion (IL), New York (NY), USP Navosta (TX), Pelican Bay (CA), Phoenix (AZ), Tucson (AZ), and Toronto, Ontario. This year we hope to expand the amount of runs in prisons and other cities, as well as increase the amount of funds raised for community projects. NYC ABC's goal with this year's run is \$3,000. You can donate online by going to gumroad.com/nycabc

This year's run will take place on Sunday, September 4th at 2:00pm in solidarity and conjunction with runs that will take place in cities and prison yards across the country at the same time.

REGISTER AS, OR SPONSOR, A PARTICIPANT

To raise our goal of \$3,000, we need your support:

* Promote – print and distribute this poster and/or this flyer to friends and local businesses, your doctor's office, laundromat, food co-op, wealthy benefactor, et cetera.

* **Run/walk/bike/roll** in the 5k – We need participants who can run/walk/bike/roll the 5k and are able to collect financial pledges to offer as donations to the run. Download the brochure, complete with registration and sponsor form right here.

* **Volunteer** for the run – We need folks who are willing to staff a registration/literature table, hand out water, bike the route as street medics, and help chalk the route beforehand.

* **Donate online** at gumroad.com/nycabc

* **Donate to the run/sponsor a participant** – If you are not able to attend, but want to support this fundraising effort, please mail donations to:

NYC ABC

**Post Office Box 110034
Brooklyn, New York 11211**

Your donation of \$10 or more entitles you to the celebratory picnic after the event.

Each year, we split proceeds between the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Warchest Program and a local organization. This year's partner group will be the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP).

The Warchest Program:

The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) has initiated a program designed to send monthly checks to those Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War who have been receiving insufficient, little, or no financial support during their imprisonment. The Warchest program was initiated in November 1994. Its purpose is to collect monthly funds from groups and individual supporters, and send that money to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POW) via monthly checks. Over the last two decades, the ABCF warchest has dispensed over \$75,000 to political prisoners in the United States. Currently, there are ten imprisoned comrades who receive a monthly stipend as part of the program; they are:

Joseph Bowen
Xinachtli (FKA Alvaro Luna Hernandez)
Herman Bell
Robert Seth Hayes
Maliki Shakur Latine
Ruchell Magee
Sundiata Acoli
Hanif Bey
Oso Blanco

For more information, visit: abcf.net/warchest-program

Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP):

The Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (QDEP) is a collective Alternative to Detention (ATD), detention center visitation, direct service, and community organizing project that works with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Two Spirit, Trans, Gender Non-Conforming, and HIV+ detainees and their families currently in detention centers, those that are recently released from detention centers, and undocumented folks in New York City. For more information, visit qdep.org

Directions:

From the Q train, get off at the Prospect Park stop. Walk to Lincoln Road and turn right into the park. We'll be about 700 feet away.

The event will be one lap around what is known as the Main Loop, and will total five kilometers.