



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for September 13th

25 Aug - Update on Mumia's Hepatitis C Legal Case

On August 23, 2015, over a year ago, Mumia filed a motion for an injunction to require that the Pennsylvania DOC provide him with the cure for Hepatitis C.

MORE:

Evidence presented at a hearing in December 2015 showed that the disease is causing extreme suffering for Mumia. His blood work is abnormal, his liver is deteriorating. He has a skin condition that causes constant itching, and he suffers from side effects of medication used to alleviate some of the symptoms.

There has been no ruling from the Court despite the fact that it is fully briefed. We have updated the court with more recent medical records that show MAJ's current condition. We hope the court rules soon. Either way, the court rules there will likely be an appeal to the United States Court of Appeal for the Third Circuit.

In the meantime, there has been much "motion practice" in the civil case from which the injunction motion stems. The defendants (DOC officials) have filed motions to dismiss. We (the plaintiff) have filed an amended complaint as well as a motion to add Department of Corrections chief John Wetzel and Dr. Paul Noel as defendants. Once we prevail on the motions to dismiss, we will be in the "discovery" phase and able to get documents and take the depositions of the defendants and others.

In other words: no matter what happens with the injunction motion, the case continues and we can continue to seek necessary medical care.

August 28th - Still Fighting for the Hep C Cure, Water Crisis at SCI Mahanoy, and New Litigation

The movement to Free Mumia is awaiting a ruling by District Court Judge Robert Mariani on whether or not the PA Department of Corrections (DOC) is bound, by law, to administer the known Hepatitis C cure to Mumia. This important ruling will set a precedent for thousands of prisoners in Pennsylvania suffering with Hepatitis C, a disease that destroys the liver.

As of this writing, Mumia is once again experiencing itching all over his body as well as diarrhea. We suspect, but cannot confirm, that the diarrhea is linked to the severe contamination of the prison's water supply, which began two weeks ago. Prisoners at SCI Mahanoy, the prison that houses Mumia, have reported that water coming out of all water sources is dark and emits a foul odor.

Mumia's itching is a symptom of his ongoing skin problem, a condition disproportionately seen in black patients with active Hep C.

In general, Mumia's health has waxed and waned over the last months, which is customary with patients with Hep C. However, Mumia's disease process is chronic and active. This means that even if the symptoms of Hep C are not immediately visible, the liver is still being damaged silently.

According to all of the medical specialists who testified in Mumia's health hearing in December 2015, there is a 60% likelihood that Mumia has serious liver damage.

Despite these findings, for the last year, instead of administering the Hep C cure to Mumia, the prison infirmary has been giving him a legion of topical medications including light therapy. The topical treatments suppress his skin condition temporarily, but have harmful side effect. For example, recently,

Mumia experienced a first-degree burn on his right arm near the elbow. Prison doctors believe that the burn was caused by the combination of the new skin medication, Otezla, they administered to him, the light therapy he has been getting three times a week, and his exposure to sunlight during yard.

There are also new developments in Mumia's conviction case. On August 8, 2016, Judith Ritter and Christina Swarns filed a petition based on the June 2016 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Williams v. Commonwealth*. This important ruling determined that a judge can not fairly adjudicate an appeal of a case for which he/she has previously authorized a conviction, as a DA, for example. In this case, the high court ruled that Chief Justice of the PA Supreme Court, Ronald Castille, should have recused himself from Williams's appellate review because he had previously authorized the Williams death sentence as the Philadelphia district attorney.

In Mumia's case, the same judge, Ronald Castille, heard Mumia's appeal to the PA Supreme Court in 1998 despite a petition requesting his recusal by Mumia's attorneys. Castille had been assistant DA during Mumia's original trial and DA during Mumia's first appeal.

On the international front: the French support group, Collectif Français Libéron Mumia, is organizing a meeting in September with members of the European Parliament to discuss Mumia's health crisis and that of the approximately 10 thousand PA prisoners with Hep C. This follows the visit with Mumia last year of Patrick Le Hyaric, a member of the European Parliament and vice-chair of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left Group. Le Hyaric has collected 108 signatures in support of Mumia from members of the European Parliament representing 16 countries and including many French deputies and senators. Bob Boyle, Mumia's attorney, and Nyle Forte, a young minister and Ph.D. candidate in religion at Princeton University, will join that delegation in September.

Note: Minor correction: it looks like, according to Pam Africa, the diarrhea preceded the water problem and may well be another side effect of the horrible medication Mumia is being given.

September 1st - Imprisoned ex-Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal denied hepatitis C treatment

by Renée Feltz (*The Guardian*)

The internationally known imprisoned former Black Panther and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal has had his request for a life-saving hepatitis C treatment denied by a federal judge.

Abu-Jamal was sentenced to death for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer, but maintained his innocence and Amnesty International says he was denied a fair trial. After 30 years on death row, his sentence was overturned on constitutional grounds. He is now serving life without parole, and his supporters have shifted their focus to his access to medical care.

Abu-Jamal sued the state of Pennsylvania to receive anti-viral medication for hepatitis C after he was hospitalized in critical condition last year. Officials told him he was not sick enough to be eligible for the treatment, which has a 90-95% cure rate but costs \$1,000 per dose, and is taken once a day for 12 weeks.

On Wednesday US district court judge Robert Mariani said Abu-Jamal's lawsuit wrongly targeted the warden and the prison system's medical chief, and should have named the four members of the state's hepatitis C committee instead. Abu-Jamal's lawyers say the committee did not exist at the time the lawsuit was filed.

One of the members was later added as a defendant: Dr Paul Noel, chief of clinical services for the state's department of corrections. The judge cited his testimony that the state's protocol is designed "to identify those with the most serious liver disease and to treat them first, and then ... move down the list to the lower priorities".

He said prisoners with esophageal varices, or enlarged veins in the throat that have begun to bleed would "move on to immediate treatment, and if they don't have varices, they can wait".

In court filings, a lawyer for the Pennsylvania's prison system wrote "there simply is not enough money to treat every individual" with chronic hepatitis C and that treating all of them "would cost approximately \$600m. Such an expense would effectively cripple the department".

Even as the judge denied Abu-Jamal's request he still found that the evidence and testimony presented in the case demonstrate that Pennsylvania's hepatitis C protocol for inmates fails to meet constitutional standards.

Newly obtained evidence in Abu-Jamal's case revealed that Pennsylvania treats just about five of more than 6,000 prisoners who are infected with hepatitis C. The details will probably be used in an unrelated class action lawsuit filed by other Pennsylvania prisoners seeking similar treatment for the disease.

Hundreds who have been moved to the prison infirmaries are "dying in isolation, often chained to their beds" says Noelle Hanrahan, a supporter of Abu-Jamal who monitors prison conditions and records his commentaries for Prison Radio.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hepatitis C has infected three million people in the United States, including more than 700,000 in prison nationwide.

Other states have responded to the health crisis differently. In the last two years New York increased spending on drugs for prisoners infected with the disease by more than 350%. California is also treating prisoners with hepatitis C on a large scale.

Judge Mariani wrote that Pennsylvania's "treatment protocol as currently adopted and implemented ... prolongs the suffering of those who have been diagnosed with chronic hepatitis C". He added that it "allows the progression of the disease to accelerate so that it presents a greater threat" of related liver disease, cancer and death.

Abu-Jamal's lawyers called the decision a partial setback.

"We are frustrated he won't get the treatment that the rest of the judge's opinion makes clear he is entitled to," said Bret Grote of the Abolitionist Law Center. "But the judge's ruling makes clear that if what he considers the proper defendants were in front of him, he was prepared to strike down the protocol and order that my client be treated in accord with proper medical standards."

31 Aug - Eric Kings Sentencing Statement

We have received the transcript from Eric's sentencing, including his sentencing statement. We are sharing Eric's statement in its entirety.

MORE:

First I'd like to congratulate the Court on such a stellar job. Another graffiti homeless person is off the street. So I'm sure the FBI and Patrick are very proud of themselves. This is a good picture for the United States and they needed this. This is a solid win. You do an amazing job up there.

This is supposed to be a chance for me to speak. I didn't speak this entire time. You've held sentencing and punishment over me, and even now no matter what I say you can still hold that against me, not let me do things, not recommend things. That's such a farce. This whole court's a farce.

I stated what I did. I'm happy I did it. The government in this country is disgusting. The way they treat poor people, the way they treat brown people, the way they treat everyone that's not in the class of white and male is disgusting, patriarchal, filthy racist.

You're all a part of this. From the man over there who works the same corporation company that ran Prime Health Pro (ph) to you that takes away freedom and tears apart the community. You do that thinking that this is justice. This is no justice in ripping people from their homes. For what? Breaking a window? Ten years for breaking a window? And the cop that killed Freddie Gray got zero? The people that killed Trayvon Martin got zero? It's so horrendous.

And I'm not sorry for what I did. I'm sorry that I got caught before I could do more things. I would have loved to attack more government buildings and make sure that bubble of safety that prosecutors and FBI agents and judges feel got shattered so that they stay in their safe pockets knowing they can't touch me even though there are consequences to my actions. Same way we have consequences for our actions. If I throw a hammer out a window, I get ten years in jail. If you sentence a first-time offender to life in prison if he sold meth, you get a clap on the back from the President and a job for life. And if that's justice, then you're use of justice is so skewed and just horrendously immoral.

Further, this isn't a victory for the State. This isn't a win for any of you, any of you on this other side of the table. It's done nothing but affirm my views, affirm my beliefs that the government is just disgusting. Even when I walk in I can't tell my wife I love her. I can't look at her and smile because, what, I broke a window? That's justice? That's fair? That's not justice. There's no rehabilitation in that. There's no freedom in that. There's no constitutional rights in that. It's just bullying. It's just the upper class saying we're going to keep people who did not agree to our rules and then decide not to live by them, we're going to keep those people shackled up so we can live comfortably in our own little bubbles and we never have to look outside of those bubbles to realize what's really happening, which this class is set up to keep people down, and when people step out of that class system, they get punished horrendously, more than any other country, any other country on earth, the land of the free. It's despicable.

This sentence has brought me closer to the community I really serve. That's the radical view, the poor community. It's shown me what solidarity means. It's shown me what friendship means. It's shown me what love means. It's shown me what being a real human means, not standing by people when they're knocked down, not further knocking them down, not going after poor people if they want to provide for their families and not do it the way that the white society thinks is appropriate. You're disgusting.

1 Sept - Leonard Peltier Is My Father and He Deserves Clemency

Kathy Peltier is the daughter of Leonard Peltier and wrote the following.

MORE:

by Kathy Peltier (*Time*)

When I first heard that President Obama had commuted the sentences of more than 300 federal prisoners this month, my heart stopped for a moment. I wondered, as I do every time the President uses his clemency power, whether my father's name would be on the list. Although this was the largest round of commutations ever announced by a president in a single day, it still came as a disappointment. My father, Leonard Peltier, was not among them.

During his final months in office, President Obama is working against the clock to correct past legacies of injustice. He has focused his clemency powers on federal prisoners who were locked up in the context of the War on Drugs. As the daughter of an incarcerated person, I know how extraordinary it is that thousands of unjustly jailed people will finally come home. But I also hope that this initiative doesn't overshadow the other cases sitting on the President's desk, and that he takes the opportunity to address even older, more politically sensitive cases that require an equally extraordinary remedy—cases like my father's.

A prominent member of the American Indian Movement, my father is synonymous with the struggle for both native rights and injustice. He has been behind bars for more than 40 years—my entire life. The first time my father saw me, I was nine months old, and I was handed to him in a courtroom. I know that my

story isn't unique—many children grow up without fathers. But that doesn't make his absence any easier, or erase the decades of injustice my family has endured.

In 1975, two FBI agents and a native person were killed during a confrontation between the FBI and the American Indian Movement on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. My father was there that day, and has repeatedly expressed regret that any lives were lost. But he has always maintained his innocence. My father was ultimately extradited from Canada 40 years ago, convicted of the agents' killings and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences based on testimony that the FBI has admitted they knew was perjured.

Despite the many people—including judges, prison guards and legal experts—who have agreed and insisted that his trial was unfair, he remains in prison. Amnesty International, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, Native American advocates and countless activists have been fighting for his release for years.

Just before he left office, we believed that President Clinton was very close to pardoning my father. When FBI agents protested outside the White House a month before his last day in office, our hopes for my father's freedom were shattered. Jan. 20, 2000, came and went, and my father's case remained unaddressed. That incredibly painful disappointment marked a turning point in my life. To have come so close to having him home, and then losing that chance—I was heartbroken, and I began to distance myself from the case.

But I cannot distance myself any longer. My father is very sick. He's 71 now and has a host of medical issues, including suffering from a stroke, diabetes, undergoing multiple jaw surgeries and, now, an abdominal aortic aneurysm—a condition that can be life-threatening if not treated. The prison, USP Coleman, won't operate to repair or remove it until the aneurysm grows to five centimeters and my aging father is spending his days in a maximum security prison, where he's at constant risk of a physical altercation that could cause the aneurysm to rupture.

His case may be 40 years old—and for some people, it's part of a difficult history that's better left in the past. But it defines every day of my present. Every moment my father spent in prison has impacted the lives of his family members. While Leonard Peltier is thought of by many as a father to the movement for the rights of native people, he was never able to be a true father to his own children.

He used to tell my siblings and me: "When I get out, I'm going to raise you." For years, I believed it. Then I learned not to hope. I have never been able to celebrate a birthday with him. He did not get to teach me to ride a bike or comfort me when I was hurt or watch me graduate. My father has been a ghost in my life, and I've often wrestled with the anger and sadness caused by his absence. I remind myself that he hasn't missed these moments because he wanted to—he had no choice.

Making things more difficult, during my father's decades-long imprisonment, he has been transferred at least seven times, sometimes without notice. It's been a struggle to maintain a relationship with him when he is consistently thousands of miles away, separated not only by distance, but also by prison walls.

My worst fear is that my father will die in prison, and that I will never know him as a free man. Clemency for my father would mean our family would get to spend what's left of his life together for the first time. That freedom would also mean that he can get the help and treatment he truly needs. The truth is, I don't know how much longer he will be alive. But I do know that even a week with him would mean the world to me. And I know that to watch him die in prison, without clearing his name, would devastate our family even more than the past four decades have.

My father and our family have lived with this injustice for far too long. At this moment, only the president can decide his fate. I hope that President Obama will grant Leonard Peltier clemency before it's too late.

The prison did not respond to request for comment.

September 24th - Leonard Peltier Birthday Event

WHAT: Birthday/Clemency Party

WHEN: 2:00-5:00pm, Saturday, September 24

WHERE: Project Reach - 39 Eldridge Street, 4th Floor, New York, New York

COST: FREE

MORE:

THE CLOCK IS TICKING...

On Leonard's actual birthday, September 12, President Obama will be in office for only 129 more days.

Yes, the time is running out on Leonard Peltier's only hope for freedom. We must continue to work harder than ever for his release.

Join us on the afternoon of Saturday, September 24.

Fill out a postcard asking the President for clemency for Leonard.

Get an update on Leonard's health.

Hear from Leonard himself -- his birthday statement.

Enjoy some light refreshments.

Pam Africa will be among our speakers

Spiritchild will be among our performers

Others tba

Project Reach is located one block west of Allen Street (aka First Avenue above Houston), between Allen and Forsyth.

The cross streets are Hester and Canal. If you get to Canal, coming from either east or west, turn north on Eldridge and you are practically right there. Very easy from the M15 or M15 Select bus stop at Hester St.

It is closest to the East Broadway F Train Station, the Grand St. B & D, and the Essex Street J & M.

2 Sept - Maroon's Black August Salute to Black Lives Matter

As Black August came to a close, Russell Maroon Shoatz wrote the following...

MORE:

It is fitting that the initials BLM are short for Black Lives Matter. After all, BLM is also short for the Black Liberation Movement. And the two are one and the same. In memory of all of the Martyrs who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of Black Liberation, from the slave ship rebels, to John Brown, to Malcolm and Martin, to the Panthers and Black Liberation Army, to Marilyn Buck, Hugo Yogi Pinell, and our Political Prisoners who breathed their last in captivity, I say: Right On Black Lives Matter! I salute you this Black August for continuing the Struggle.

Straight Ahead!

2 Sept - Chelsea Manning Update

We're including the latest by and about Chelsea Manning, currently on hunger strike, below.

MORE:

September 2nd - Moving on: Reflecting on my identity

by Chelsea Manning (*Medium*)

After weeks of emotion and thought, I've decided I need to tell you something: I am tired of being defined by the world through the narrow lens of a single event that happened in my life several years ago.

Although I have dedicated the vast majority of my life to the principles of transparency, social equality, individual protections, free speech, human rights, and justice, the world usually chooses to define me with this description:

“Chelsea Manning, formerly known as Bradley Manning, was a U.S. Army Soldier who was convicted in July 2013 of Theft of Government information, violations of the Espionage Act and Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and other offenses, for disclosing hundreds of thousands of military and diplomatic documents for public release, in 2010. Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison in August 2013.”

This is the way the world sees me. It is the way it judges me.

For many years now I have just accepted this as fact. For years, I have accepted it as reality. But, now my priorities have shifted. I am faced with a more dire reality: That I am tired of being defined by the world, instead of being allowed to define myself.

In the weeks following the shooting of the Pulse night club I became very reflective. I began pondering some of life's burning questions: Who am I? What do I want? What are my goals? What is most important?

In general, I am not fond of sweeping broad-stroked oversimplifications. In this spirit, when hearing me labeled as a “hero” and a “whistleblower,” I take a deep sigh. The bottom line is that I am only human. When I cut my finger turning the page of a book, I bleed like everybody else.

These last few years, I have been evolving and becoming more real, more intimate, and more human. More like the “real me.” More of the woman that I am.

I am a growing, changing, shifting, and expanding creature, but much about me is quite normal and boring.

When I was free, I loved binge watching Seinfeld, Thirty-rock, and Friends, while eating ice cream out of the tub, with a big spoon, and having left over pizza for breakfast. I was an “all nighter” computer programmer. I was a perky and over-caffeinated barista. I was a clothing store associate, but one who wouldn't hesitate to recommend a customer visit a different store, for cheaper clothes that look similar or better!

I am a still a library beaver and a researcher. I snort when I laugh. I sneeze like a squeaky mouse.

The world today is a very different place than one we lived in back in 2010. 2010 seems like ancient history now. Today, I find myself looking for my place in the world in new ways.

In the meantime, I admit that I want to be seen and understood as the woman that I actually am—with all of my flaws and eccentricities—perhaps at the expense of what people expect me to be.

September 9th - ‘I Need Help’: Chelsea Manning Launches Hunger Strike

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

Chelsea Manning, who is currently serving a 35-year prison sentence at Fort Leavenworth, has launched a hunger strike that she says will last until military personnel and others in the United States government stop bullying her and give her the help she needs.

In a statement from the Chelsea Manning Support Network, Manning shares, “As of 12:01 am Central Daylight Time on September 9, 2016, and until I am given minimum standards of dignity, respect, and humanity, I shall—refuse to voluntarily cut or shorten my hair in any way; consume any food or drink voluntarily, except for water and currently prescribed medications; and comply with all rules, regulations, laws, and orders that are not related to the two things I have mentioned.”

Manning makes it clear this is a “peaceful and nonviolent” act and any “physical harm” that may occur will likely be “at the hands of military or civilian staff,” which “will be unnecessary and vindictive.”

“I will not physically resist or in any way harm another person. I have also submitted a ‘do not resuscitate’ letter that is effective immediately. This shall include any attempts to forcibly cut or shorten my hair or to forcibly feed me by any medical or pseudo-medical means,” Manning adds.

She pledges to engage in a hunger strike until she is treated like a human being again and expects it to “last for a long time.” It is quite possible the strike will end in “permanent incapacitation or death,” and she claims she is prepared mentally and emotionally for what may happen.

Chase Strangio, an ACLU attorney who represents Manning in her lawsuit against the Defense Department for failing to treat her gender dysphoria, said he learned last night that Manning planned to engage in a hunger strike in protest of her “ongoing denial” of “medically necessary health care and the relentless scrutiny and abuses she has experienced in the years since her arrest.”

“I am deeply saddened and very concerned for Chelsea’s well-being,” Strangio stated. “The government has long been aware of her medical needs and continues to ignore them.”

“When we filed our initial case against the Department of Defense in September of 2014 over Chelsea’s treatment related to her gender dysphoria, we made very clear that the lack of treatment put her at very serious risk of harm,” Strangio added. “They have known this for years. We are still in litigation over her treatment and are optimistic that justice will ultimately prevail, but the government need not wait to be ordered to do the right thing and we hope they act promptly to treat Chelsea consistent with their constitutional obligations.”

Manning was convicted of several offenses a little more than 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, now 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.

In August, the U.S. Army brought administrative charges against Manning for attempting suicide in July. She was charged with resisting the force cell team, the prohibited use of property, and conduct that threatens the good order and discipline of the prison. The resisting charge was brought against her, even though she was unconscious when she was removed from her cell.

As the result of a court challenge, she pushed the military to allow her to receive hormone therapy for her gender dysphoria. She started therapy in February 2015, but mental health treatment has been wholly inadequate. And, despite the fact that her doctors believe she should grow her hair out and follow female grooming standards, she is still prohibited from growing out her hair inside Leavenworth.

“I need help. I needed help earlier this year. I was driven to suicide by the lack of care for my gender dysphoria that I have been desperate for. I didn’t get any. I still haven’t gotten any,” Manning said in her statement.

“I have asked for help time and time again for six years and through five separate confinement locations. My request has only been ignored, delayed, mocked, given trinkets and lip service by the prison, the military, and this administration.”

Manning even mentioned how her father treated her, sharing that her father would beat her “repeatedly for simply not being masculine enough” when she was a child. If she cried, he would say, “Suck it up.” This just worsened the pain.

Hundreds of thousands of people signed petitions circulated by Fight For the Future, Demand Progress, RootsAction, and Care2 in early August. Those petitions were delivered to the Secretary of the Army’s office and demanded administrative charges be dropped.

Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, a long-time supporter, has called the charges against Manning a scandal and urged the military to reverse course. He believes the Army is wasting “no opportunity to make an example of her” and contends they are deliberately trying to break her down.

Since her suicide attempt, Manning has published intensely personal writings expressing gratitude to her supporters and sharing some of her innermost thoughts as a transgender woman in a military prison.

On August 19, The Guardian published a column, where she described the first time she passed as a woman in public.

“Being myself for a whole day taught me a few lessons: trying to meet the expectations that I believed were placed on me by society was unsustainable. I was miscast in the play of life, and it was urgent that I admit that sooner rather than later. Joy, confidence, and security can’t begin until we are able to just be ourselves.”

2 Sept - As Obama's Presidency Enters Final Months, Thousands Behind Bars Hope for Clemency

As Obama's presidency enters its final months, thousands of people imprisoned on federal drug sentences fervently hope he will grant them clemency.

MORE:

by Victoria Law (*Truthout*)

But family members, loved ones and those who have spent time behind bars are determined to help push as many people as possible out the prison doors before Obama leaves the Oval Office.

In August, their effort got two significant boosts. On August 3, 214 people in federal prisons across the country were called into their case managers' offices. There, they were told that the president had issued them clemency, meaning that their sentences had been commuted and they would soon be released from prison. It was the largest group of clemencies issued in one day since Gerald Ford's 1974 blanket amnesty for those who dodged the draft or deserted the military during the Vietnam War. Less than four weeks later, on August 30, another 111 people received the same news: their sentences had been commuted and they would be released soon.

In between those two dates, on August 8, thousands of others were called into their case managers' offices and told that their clemency applications had been denied. That denial means that they are unable to reapply for clemency for one year, by which time they will face the challenge of convincing not just the Office of the Pardon Attorney but also a newly elected president to give them another chance.

"I don't understand the logic of the denials," said Amy Povah, founder and president of CAN-DO Clemency, a national organization that advocates for clemency for people convicted of drug offenses.

Issuing denials means that the president no longer has the option to grant that person clemency before leaving office, effectively leaving many to die in prison.

Povah knows what it's like to hope and wait and pray for executive clemency. In 1991, Povah was sentenced to 24 years and four months in prison for conspiracy related to her then-husband's ecstasy dealing. (In contrast, her husband fully cooperated with the authorities and was sentenced to six years in a German prison. He served four years and three months.) She applied for clemency. In July 2000, Povah was called into her case manager's office and was told that she was going home. She had received clemency.

But she remembers another visit to her case manager's office months before. On Christmas Eve 1999, Povah was sitting on her bunk. Prison staff had already passed out its Christmas goodie bags -- each woman received a pair of socks and sticky candy without a wrapper, some of which, Povah remembered, was stuck to the sock. Then she heard her name over the prison loudspeaker ordering her to an administrative office.

"I thought, Omigod, this is it. Why else would someone call me on Christmas Eve?" She remembered that her legs were shaking so hard that she barely made it across the lobby to her case manager's office. Hands trembling, she pushed open the door and found not her case manager but a staff person from commissary who wanted her to sign off on a special purchase she had made.

Seven months later, when the prison's loudspeaker called her name again, she refused to get her hopes up. "In fact, I figured they were going to ship me to another institution or that it must be bad news 'cause that's all we used to get in there: more bad news, never happy news." But this time it was happy news. Povah would soon be going home.

Four Months and 11,000 Petitions to Go

Obama has a little over four months left in office and over 11,000 petitions for commutations (as well as nearly 1,500 petitions for pardons) pending. Advocates, family members and soon-to-be-released drug war prisoners are celebrating the 562 clemencies Obama has already granted, but they're also realizing that currently, clemency campaigns are a race against the clock.

"Come January, when he's done with his last term, the ones serving life sentences, they're going to die in there," said Jason Hernandez, the founder of Crack Open the Door, which advocates for clemency for those serving life sentences for federal crack-cocaine convictions.

Hernandez can't envision Trump -- who has railed against criminal justice reform, called clemency recipients "bad dudes" and warned the public to "sleep tight" --granting clemency. And, he says, even if Clinton were inclined to undo some of the devastation wrought by her husband's policies, she most likely would not do so during her first term.

"A lot of presidents won't grant clemencies during their first term, especially not to people who are not white-collar criminals, are minorities and are going to be returned back to the same communities where there are drugs," Hernandez said. "It would be political suicide to grant someone clemency in your first term and they come out and do something else [and are re-imprisoned]." But even if Clinton is elected to a first, and then a second term, there's no indication that she will continue Obama's mass commutations. For those who are already aging or sick, the delay may indeed mean that they will die behind bars.

Like Povah, Hernandez has firsthand experience with clemency. In 1998, Hernandez had been sentenced to life in prison for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute. At his sentencing, the judge stated that he disagreed with the crack-cocaine sentencing disparity but, under the sentencing guidelines, had no choice but to sentence the 21-year-old to life without parole. Hernandez applied for clemency in 2012; in December 2013, he was among the first clemencies granted by Obama, known as the Obama Eight. He

spent one year in a halfway house, then returned home to Texas where he continues to help others file for clemency. He stays in touch with many of the people he met while behind bars through CorrLinks, the federal prison system's e-messaging system. He encourages them to file clemency on their own rather than wait for Clemency Project 2014 -- a nongovernmental working group that reviews the cases of drug war prisoners, assigns them a lawyer and files clemency applications on their behalf. Hernandez walks those in prison through the process, providing advice not only for the person seeking clemency but also for family members.

Josephine Ledesma is one of the many he's helped. In 1992, Ledesma (whose name was misspelled as "Ledezma" in court documents and subsequent prison records) was sentenced to life in prison for conspiracy to transport cocaine. Her daughter Lizette was then 11 years old.

Ledesma never gave up hope of being reunited with her daughter. When Clemency Project 2014 (CP2014) was announced, she filled out the paperwork and was assigned an attorney. That attorney disappeared without filing her application. Through Povah and another attorney, she later learned that she had been denied because of her alleged leadership role in the conspiracy (others charged in the same conspiracy had named her as a leader).

When Povah, who had served time with Ledesma at the federal prison in Dublin, California, met Hernandez at a White House event, she mentioned Ledesma's case -- and the fact that her attorney had disappeared. Hernandez offered to file Ledesma's petition himself and did so in March 2016. Given that his own clemency had taken two years, he wasn't overly hopeful. "I told her, 'Look, this might not get to Obama in time,'" he recalled.

He and Povah also reached out to Lizette, now an adult, and began walking her through what she, as a family member, could do to increase her mother's chances. Lizette contacted people who had known her mother -- both before and during her time in prison -- and gathered letters of support to include in her mother's clemency packet. She met with her Congressperson Norma Torres to talk about how her mother's incarceration continues to affect her. Torres then contacted the Department of Justice (DOJ) in support of Ledesma.

"They helped me take those steps that I probably wouldn't have taken," Lizette told Truthout. "Otherwise, I would have just sat there and waited."

On August 3, Ledesma's name was on the list of clemencies. On August 31, she walked out the prison gates and, for the first time in 24 years, had breakfast with her three adult children. They then drove her to a halfway house in Riverside, California, ten minutes from her daughter's house, where she will spend the next month before being released on home confinement until August 3, 2017.

"You have to do things that you think don't really matter," explained Povah, who noted that, when she was applying for clemency, 20 legislators had written her letters of support after receiving multiple packets from their constituents.

But Povah is reluctant to credit herself or CAN-DO with the increase in clemencies. Following the announcement of 214 clemencies, she issued the following statement: "We realize many factors are involved, not the least of which is a vigorous vetting by the Office of the Pardon Attorney and Deputy Attorney General who have the final say as to which cases travel to the White House."

Hernandez, however, does believe that organizers' efforts have had a significant impact. He points to Ledesma, who would have fallen through the cracks and lost her opportunity for clemency. He also pointed out that CAN-DO's efforts continually raise not only individual applicants, but help garner wider support for (and lessen opposition to) mass clemencies. "People need to understand that they're not just a statistic, they're not just a number. They're someone's mother, daughter or sister," he said.

The Guardian Angels Spring into Action

Povah and Hernandez have teamed up with other clemency recipients, such as Ramona Brant and Angie Jenkins, to create the CAN-DO Guardian Angel Program. Their goal is to match federal drug war prisoners seeking clemency with outside supporters who can help garner letters of support, file paperwork, follow up with the Office of the Pardon Attorney and draw public attention to the injustices of their sentences. Over 50 people have signed up to help with the race against the clock. Some, like Lizette Ledesma and Rita Juarez (whose fiancé Antonio Lopez also received clemency on August 3), are family members who have never given up hope. Others, like Povah and Hernandez, are formerly incarcerated.

Lisa Hanna knows what it's like to have her life ripped away because of drug war policies -- and what it means to have a helping hand from the outside world. Like Povah, Hanna's imprisonment was the result of her husband pointing a finger at her to reduce his own prison time. Hanna had already left him months earlier after he had beaten her and threatened to kill her. Though he had no idea where she had gone when he was arrested for dealing methamphetamine, he told DEA officials that all of the drugs in the house were hers. For his cooperation, he received an 87-month sentence. Hanna was offered a 235-month sentence if she pled guilty. If she chose to go to trial, she faced life in prison. "And the feds don't have parole," she reminded Truthout, referring to the fact that federal parole was eliminated in 1987. She chose to plead guilty, ultimately serving over 15 years.

Hanna was released from prison in January 2015. She spent three months in a halfway house and another six months under home confinement at her sister's house. That November, after she had completed home confinement and had started her five-year probation sentence, she received word that she had received a two-point reduction under the Drugs Minus Two sentencing reductions, taking 47 months off her prison sentence. In other words, "I basically over-served my sentence for four years," Hanna told Truthout.

Hanna did not forget the women still left inside. She also remembers what it's like to have help from outside. In 2004, she received a letter from Amy Povah, who had seen her story posted on the website of the November Coalition, an organization that challenges the drug war and works to free those impacted by it. "She asked if I had filed clemency and if she could help me do so," Hanna recalled. Povah helped Hanna file three petitions for clemency. Each was denied. "When Bush was president, he granted one [clemency] per year to people who were darn near dead and should have gotten compassionate release. So I was in good company being denied; there were thousands of us." (George W. Bush granted 11 commutations during his presidency.)

Though none of these efforts succeeded in securing an earlier release, Hanna emphasized the importance of that support. "It was great to feel like someone out there cared even if I didn't go home early," she said. So this year, when she saw Povah's call for people to become Guardian Angels, she immediately signed up.

Initially, Hanna had hoped to advocate for Lori Kavitz, who was sentenced to 24 years and four months for conspiracy to distribute meth in 2001. "I spent nine years with her in Illinois and Florida," she said. The two met when Hanna first arrived at the federal prison camp at Pekin, where Kavitz was the librarian. Hanna, who had a law degree, spent many hours in the prison's library helping women with their legal work. Between helping others, the two women bonded over books. "She can recommend a book to anyone that will speak to their heart," Hanna said, recalling that Kavitz recommended *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* to her. "It was awesome," she said.

When Hanna learned that her 25-year-old nephew had died, Kavitz was her emotional bedrock. "Most people would say, 'I'm sorry for your loss,'" she explained, her voice choking at the memory. "But when I saw Lori, she opened her arms wide and held me and cried with me and went through it with me."

By the time Hanna learned about the Guardian Angels program, someone else had already signed up to be Kavitz's Guardian Angel. So Hanna began working with Pauline Blake, who had also been sentenced to 24 years and four months.

As Blake's Guardian Angel, Hanna ensured that all information published on CAN-DO about Blake and her case was accurate. She kept in contact with the Office of the Pardon Attorney, which vets all applications, to ensure that Blake's case was still pending and to keep her name in front of the decision-makers. On August 3, Hanna scanned the list of names and found Blake's. "I was elated," she recalled. But when she scrolled down to the Ks and didn't see Kavitz's name, she said she was devastated. "It breaks my heart every time a list [of clemencies] comes out and Lori Kavitz's name is not on it. I look and she's not there and I cry." She's determined to do everything she can to help Kavitz get clemency before Obama leaves office. "She's got children who are grown and grandchildren she's never met," she said.

Left Behind Because of Language Barrier

One population that has largely been left out of clemency support has been those whose English is limited or non-existent.

Hernandez is Mexican, but he doesn't speak Spanish, so when he began receiving emails from people who only spoke and wrote Spanish, he had difficulty communicating and helping them.

After filing Ledesma's petition, Hernandez asked if she would speak to Eva Palma Atencio, who was sentenced to life in 2003. Neither Palma nor her family, who live in Mexico, speak or write English. Hernandez asked Ledesma, who is fluent in both English and Spanish, if she would translate for Palma. For years, Palma and Ledesma had both been in the federal prison in Dublin, California, but their interactions were limited to attending the same religious services. "They never sat down and learned each other's life story. It wasn't until I asked Josephine to talk to Eva that they made the connection."

Palma is not the only drug war prisoner who faced linguistic barriers. "A lot of people can't read English and so they can't fill out the forms," Hernandez said. Many do not know how to file a clemency petition. Some have mistaken the initial form to apply to CP14 [Clemency Project 2014] as the petition for clemency. "When I ask if they filed a petition, they'll say, 'Yeah, I filed,'" explained Hernandez. "But a month later, I'll get their paperwork and realize it's a form sent to CP14."

The limited literacy also means misinterpreted responses. "When CP14 told them they couldn't represent them, they thought they'd been denied by the Pardon Attorney because they couldn't understand the paperwork."

Some family members, particularly those who are not in the United States, start online petitions calling for their loved one's clemency -- but may confuse these with official clemency petitions. "Because they're not from here, they don't understand that this is not a petition to the president and that Obama may never see that petition," Hernandez explained. "There are people who are going to be left behind because they couldn't fill out the form or think they got denied."

Hernandez has struggled with these misunderstandings, especially given his own lack of Spanish skills. But now, he's got some help. With her mother soon on her way home, Lizette Ledesma continues working with the Guardian Angels, particularly with Eva Palma's family in Mexico. She says that Palma's family sometimes calls her with a question; she then calls Jason and relays his response. "What Amy and Jason have given me, I'm trying to pass on to them," she said.

Behind bars, Ledesma is also helping. In addition to speaking with Eva Palma, she translated the form for clemency from English to Spanish, which neither CP2014 nor the Bureau of Prisons had done. "They have everything [else] in prison translated into Spanish," Hernandez pointed out, "but this [form] wasn't."

Ledesma sent her translation to her daughter, who forwarded it on to Hernandez. He, in turn, sent it to several dozen people in prison who can only communicate in Spanish. "As a result, [more] people filed for clemency," he said.

Even 200 per Month Won't Do Justice

On August 11, 2016, 11,477 clemency petitions and 1,454 pardon petitions were listed as awaiting decision. (As of August 31, those numbers had not been updated.) The DOJ has stated that it feels confident that it will be able to consider every application before Obama leaves office. Others, however, are more skeptical. Hernandez, noting the numbers of drug war prisoners, stated, "One hundred or 200 [clemencies] each month still won't do justice."

Both Hernandez and Povah are hoping that, for those whose petitions don't make it to his desk, the president will use his executive power in another way. "One thing I feel really strongly that Obama can do before he leaves office is commute every life sentence to 30 years," said Povah, pointing out that before the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 eliminated federal parole, people sentenced to life could be paroled after 30 years. Presidents have the power to issue mass commutations. Presidents Ford and Carter used their executive power to enact a blanket amnesty to those who dodged the draft during the Vietnam War.

Obama could, Povah and other advocacy groups have pointed out, issue mass commutations that retroactively adjust the sentences of those convicted under old (and now outdated) drug laws. "That's one action he can do that would benefit everyone," Povah said. "He wanted criminal justice reform. He wants it to be part of his legacy. That would be one way of using his power to ensure that."

3 Sept - Brandon Baxter Needs Help with Clemency Petition

Below is information for writing a letter to the President of the United States in support of Brandon Baxter's clemency petition.

MORE:

Brandon's current sentence is to serve 9 years and 9 months in prison, to be followed by supervised release for life; his clemency petition will ask that his sentence be commuted to time served in prison, to be followed by supervised release for a maximum of five years.

If you are able to write a supporting letter, please email a scanned copy of the letter (typed and signed) to cleveland4letters@gmail.com by September 20th. We will pass the letters on to his attorney to submit them with the clemency petition, and you can also let us know if you have any questions that we'll forward to his attorney.

Letter Format

DATE

GREETING: Dear President of the United States: BODY OF LETTER:

- *Briefly discuss yourself* – who you are, your position in work or your role in the community, and any points which could establish your ability to advise the President about why Brandon's clemency petition should be granted.

- *If you know Brandon personally and can offer some personal observations, you will want to mention this in your letter.* It would be helpful to include descriptions of Brandon's character, compassion, integrity, accomplishments, interests, education, family life, interaction with and treatment of other people, and your personal and/or professional relationship with him. Is he compassionate? Generous? Thoughtful towards others? Trustworthy? Hard worker? Good friend? Committed to making the world a better place? Explain why you think this way about him.

- *When talking about Brandon and who he is, give SPECIFICS:* Don't just say he's a good person; discuss the specific things he's done that make him a good person. Examples or anecdotes which demonstrate who he is are incredibly important to helping develop a better picture of Brandon. You are encouraged to write

an honest, straightforward portrait of Brandon. Do not hesitate to write from the heart, and/or emphasize anything you feel is important.

- *Explain concrete reasons why Brandon's sentence should be commuted.* Possible things to consider writing about are: Why is his sentence too severe? In what ways has he matured or changed since he was sentenced? What are his plans for his life and helping others after prison? Base the reasons that you explain on your personal knowledge of Brandon and his situation.

TO END: Your letter should end with your name printed, and with your signature. It is extremely important that you sign your letter.

Thank you for writing a letter in support of Brandon's clemency petition; your support means a lot to him. Please contact Brandon's us if you have any questions.

6 Sept - Glitter Activists Found Not Guilty In Oklahoma

On September 6, Judge Phillipa James announced a Not Guilty Verdict in regards to last month's Disorderly Conduct trial of local environmental activists Moriah Stephenson and Stefan Warner.

MORE:

by Staff (*Popular Resistance*)

Stephenson and Warner were arrested nearly two and a half years earlier when glitter spilled off of a Hunger Games-themed banner that the activists hung in the open-to-the-public atrium of the Devon Energy building.

The glittery banner read, "The Odds Are Never in Our Favor." At their trial, Stephenson and Warner explained that the banner was intended to highlight the disproportionate ways in which oil and gas development occurs. Stephenson explained, "Our intent was to highlight that the odds are never in our favor, our being the people's favor." Stephenson explained that oil and gas development disenfranchises communities of color and low-income, rural communities, a practice commonly referred to as environmental racism.

Stephenson told the courtroom, "The purpose of the demonstration was to raise awareness about Devon Energy's involvement in tar sands extraction and the environmentally racist nature of tar sands extraction."

Warner contributed that the large tax incentives that oil and gas corporations receive have exacerbated our current economic crisis in Oklahoma. Additionally, oil and gas corporations gain wealth from hydraulic fracturing, while homeowners are forced to pay for earthquake damage that results from the disposal of fracking wastewater.

The activists' lawyer argued that Stephenson and Warner's actions were a form of protected free speech. Judge Philipa James found that Warner and Stephenson were both engaged in political protest and that the evidence presented by both the defense and the City of Oklahoma City established that there was no "public alarm" caused by the protest activity.

6 Sept - NYC: Reportback from Running Down the Walls 2016

Running Down the Walls (RDTW) 2016 was a success in building relationships, feeling the solidarity of running as our imprisoned comrades did the same, and raising funds for the ABCF Warchest and 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).

MORE:

The ~~fear factory~~ National Weather Service gave us pause and we considered rescheduling this year's event with tropical storm Hermine looming just off the coast. As it turned out, we had no floods, no rain, no high winds, just perfect weather for running. Crisis averted!

We arrived early, to avoid getting beaten to a sweet spot in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, by the gaggle of goofs clawing to get to a food circus we refuse to name. This gave us time to set up our hand-painted RDTW banner and tables of literature & food. The aforementioned mall food court for the self-perceived well-heeled was dropped squarely in the middle of our run path last year, so we switched it up on 'em. This year, our 5k was more like 5.2k (sorry, distance nerds) and consisted of a single lap around what is known as the Main Loop.

Given that this was also a picnic—outdoors, breezy, and mildly unpredictable, we set up a scaled down version of our literature table. This meant our ubiquitous red wire rack of free literature, including copies of the recently published *Conditions of Confinement* (writings by anarchist prisoner Casey Brezik), the NYC ABC Illustrated Guide to Political Prisoner and Prisoners of War, and all of the tri-fold pamphlets about many of the prisoners we support.

We had printed bib numbers for the participants. The flipside of the bib numbers had information about NYC ABC and guidelines for writing to prisoners, making it both a memento and a useful reminder to write to folks.

A few serious runners arrived as early as 1:30pm, though the announced time of the event was 2:00-7:00pm and we typically use the first half hour to register folks and take sponsor forms from those who hustled to get sponsors. Even with this schedule in mind, anarchist time prevailed and the run actually started closer to 2:45, following a group photo around the RDTW banner.

Before the run, an NYC ABC collective member went over some basics, while also kicking facts about political prisoners and state repression. We then played a greeting from Jaan Laaman, recorded specifically for the event.

Of the 60-70 folks who came to RDTW 2016, about 45 participated in the 5(.2)k. The age range was 4-72 years old. Hashtag multi-generational. Several runners were serious, several were fast, and the venn diagram of those two categories resulted in the same few folks running the fastest laps this year as last.

After running, bronchial passages fully dilated, what sounds better than a plate of barbecue and potato salad?

The picnic consisted of Texas-style barbecued jackfruit sandwiches with fresh pickles; potato salad; a variety of chips & cold drinks; and some outstanding cranberry blondies. Yes, a lot of folks came just for the food.

Before we got too deep into socializing, we read solidarity statements written for the event by Bill Dunne, Kojo Bomani Sababu, Hanif Bey, and Xinachtli.

One participant garnered over \$1,000 in sponsors, and several others raised hundreds of dollars each. All told, we raised a respectable amount of loot.

Folks sitting around, talking, having just shared the run, felt good. The group consisted of folks from diverse backgrounds, many of whom were new faces to our collective. Instagram followers brought IRL friends, and comrades & allies turned up as well. Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP), NYC Jericho Movement, International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, Family and Friends of Maliki Shakur Latine, the campaign the Bring Mumia Home, Marius Mason's support crew, the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar, and the campaign to Free the

MOVE 9 prisoners were among the represented organizations that explicitly work on political prisoner support. There were also folks from NYC Animal Defense League, the NYC Anarchist Book Fair, Black and Pink NYC, Rojava Solidarity NYC, Incarcerated Worker Organizing Committee NYC (IWOC), WESPAC, and Books Through Bars, among others. We were also thankful for the presence of Sekou Odinga and Susan Rosenberg, former political prisoners and consistent examples of solidarity through action.

Most folks had left by 6:30 and those who stayed did so to help clean up and transfer everything to the cars. So the event went as scheduled, almost to the minute.

Knowing the history of the run and the imprisoned comrades with whom we ran in solidarity elevated Running Down the Walls 2016 to an even more inspiring level.

And that's how we get down (the walls).

9 Sept - Arrests at #PrisonStrike solidarity Events

Folks in Atlanta and Asheville were arrested while protesting in solidarity with the September 9 nationwide prison strike.

MORE:

September 10th - Three Arrested in Atlanta at Prison Strike Solidarity March

Donate to help us free the 3 protesters who were arrested during today's march.

Today marks the beginning of the national prison strike. Prisoners all over the country are going on strike and refusing to cooperate with the unjust prison system. They are demanding decent pay for work, decent food and living conditions, and an end to inhumane practices like solitary confinement.

In Atlanta, supporters marched through Midtown and disrupted several corporations which profit from prison slavery. Wendy's, McDonalds, Aramark, and Starbucks all got a visit. When the march got to Starbucks, police made several violent arrests, using pepper spray and slamming people to the pavement. At one point, police even tried to run marchers over with a squad car.

We are working hard to make sure all the protesters get free as soon as possible, so everyone can continue doing the important work of supporting the ongoing prison strike. We can't get them out without enough bail money though, so if you're able to contribute, please follow the link below:
<https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/bail-out-prison-strike-supporters>

September 11th - Asheville: 8 Arrested After Throwing Down Against Pipelines and Prisons

Folks in Western North Carolina had a busy day fighting back against prisons, pipelines, and police on September 9th. A small crew got started in the morning with a visit to a state prison in Spruce Pine, NC to show solidarity with prisoners locked up far from their families in this rural prison. Unfortunately 5 people were arrested on bullshit trespassing charges for doing little more than holding a banner by the prison. Thankfully support folks mobilized quickly and secured their release within hours.

In the afternoon 200 people gathered in downtown Asheville to show solidarity with indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. After speeches by some Cherokee, Lakota, and Lumbee activists, folks hit the streets to take on TD Bank, an investor in the pipeline. Upon arriving at the bank the crowd flooded into the outer lobby of the bank building to find that the bank employees had locked themselves inside. Drumming, chanting, and speechifying commenced, essentially shutting down the bank until near closing time. The crowd was able to disperse without arrests, with the police only making half-assed attempts to disperse.

About an hour after the pipeline march, a crowd of 50-60 people took the streets in an unpermitted march through downtown during rush hour carrying banners reading “End Prison Slavery” and “Abolish Prisons”. From the start police were much more aggressive towards the marchers than earlier in the day, attempting to corral people onto the sidewalk with their cruisers. These attempts largely failed as folks held the streets and headed towards the county jail chanting anti-prison slogans and banging on pots and pans. Lots of honks of approvals and thumbs up were received from passersby. Unfortunately to get close to where prisoners are held the march had to go down a narrow side street that is out of public view. Once out of the public eye the police moved in and randomly grabbed 3 folks from the crowd and arrested them. A bit of confusion set in amongst the march at this point. But after some more chanting and noise-making, folks were eventually able to safely disperse without any further arrests. The 3 arrested were charged with blocking traffic and one was charged with resisting arrest. Again folks were able to secure the arrestees release within hours.

There is a legal fund to help out with court costs, lawyers, and other legal fees, please donate at <https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/legal-support-for-wnc-sept-9-solidarity-activists>

FTP X 3 = Fuck the Police, Fuck the Prisons, Fuck the Pipelines!

10 Sept - Ferguson protester who threw back tear gas cannister in iconic photo is charged

Arrests in the Ferguson rebellion are still happening and we're including a corporate news article about one of the latest. As always, corporate-sourced news should be critically read.

MORE:

by Kim Bell (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)

The St. Louis County counselor has filed charges against Edward Crawford, who was featured in a Post-Dispatch photo hurling a tear gas container back toward police during Ferguson protests last year.

Crawford, 26, was cited under two county ordinances: interfering with a police officer and assault. His court date is set for Sept. 9.

The assault charge, filed Aug. 3, alleges that Crawford assaulted a person by "throwing a burning gas canister at police officers and making physical contact with (an officer), causing him to be knocked to the ground." The other charge claims Crawford repeatedly failed to comply with police commands to show his hands.

County Counselor Peter Krane declined to discuss any of the allegations or say precisely what kind of physical contact caused the officer to be knocked to the ground.

The incident was part of protests on Aug. 12-13, 2014, near Chambers Road. Post-Dispatch photographer Robert Cohen took the photo that was part of a Pulitzer Prize winning collection and reproduced around the world.

“I didn’t throw a burning can back at police,” Crawford said Wednesday. “I threw it out of the way of children.” He said he didn’t see where it landed or if it hit anyone. He estimated the closest police were 30 to 40 yards away and said, “I can’t even throw a baseball that far, let alone a burning can of tear gas.”

Crawford complained that the charges took so long, and said, “I just feel like they’re trying to make something out of nothing.”

Krane’s office has one year to file such charges. He said recently that his office reviewed approximately 100 reports and expects to file fewer than 100 warrants. Among those already cited are reporters for the *The Washington Post*, *Huffington Post* and *CTV News*, a Canadian broadcast network.

Krane said his staff reviewed police reports, videos and social media before making the decisions. He defended the delay, saying the review did not start until after County Executive Steve Stenger appointed him in January.

Some civil rights attorneys have been critical of the delay. The American Civil Liberties Union and other groups claim the county counselor is pursuing charges in cases previously rejected by St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Robert McCulloch and municipal prosecutors in Ferguson and Dellwood.

11 Sept - New Poem by Marius : Minotaur

Check out this new poem from Marius Mason!

MORE:

Bull-headed, yes
That's what I'd say
Crashing around the world like in the proverbial china shop
All those broken pieces left behind
No wonder it was the Labyrinth for me
Still, my fingers touch upon (from time to time)
A silken thread in the half-dark
Winding through these endless, circling halls
And somewhere close
I smell a torch that burns

16 Sept - A Day of Action for Imam Jamil Al-Amin

WHAT: Forum on political prisoner Jamil Al-Amin

WHEN: 6:00pm, Friday, September 16

WHERE: Harlem State Office Building - 163 West 125th Street, New York, New York 10027

COST: FREE

MORE:

A cross-generation educational event to both educate the current generation and reeducate the elders, regarding the contributions, legacy, and updated condition of this outstanding leader. His transition from H. "Rap" Brown, Civil Rights pioneer, activist, and Black Power advocate, to Imam Jamil Al-Amin - Muslim leader, community activist, and now political prisoner since the year 2000, must be known and understood with the context of a continuum of struggle. Keynote presentation with film clips by Imam Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid (The Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood) guest commentary by (former political prisoner) Sekou Odinga and others. This day events are being held throughout the country.

17 Sept - Sept 9 Report Back and Strategizing

WHAT: Prison Strike Organizing

WHEN: 6:00-10:00pm, Saturday, September 17

WHERE: Bronx Social Center - 970 Prospect Avenue Bronx, New York

COST: FREE!

MORE:

Report back on the September 9 strike & strategy meeting for next steps.

17 Sept - Candles for Clemency

WHAT: Vigil and Rally

WHEN: 5:00-10:30pm, Saturday September 17

WHERE: 1 Kirby Plz then 605 Millwood Road, Mt Kisco, New York 10549

COST: \$15 if taking the bus from NYC

MORE:

We all need to go to this and represent for Jalil, Herman, Seth, Maliki and David and call bullshit on Cuomo's hype about clemency.

Since the last vigil, Cuomo has talked a lot about the New York State (NYS) clemency website (which our friends inside cannot see), webinars to train lawyers to apply for clemency on behalf of people inside and had many long term prisoners authorize release of their files to his so-called clemency bureau. We want actual clemencies, though, and for our brothers and sisters who have been in for 30, 40+ years with so-called violent cases.

This last year has seen parole denials for 3 former Black Panthers in NY state and the loss of Abdul Majid. Some of our elders, like David Gilbert, are serving outrageous 75-life sentences and cannot even go to the board.

Candles for Clemency Rally at the Mount Kisco train stations. After the rally, we will walk from the train station to the home of New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo with lit candles.

Governor Cuomo has repeatedly promised to grant clemencies to prisoners who have changed their lives, shown remorse, and paid their debt to society. Despite his promises, he has only issued two such clemencies. But he still has an opportunity to show mercy, courage, and wisdom.

On behalf of all concerned citizens of New York State, Candles for Clemency urges the Governor to keep his promises: Provide full and effective pardons to eligible youthful offenders, and clemency that restores freedom to deserving prisoners and gives them the opportunity to live productive lives and contribute to society.

Candles for Clemency is an organization of New Yorkers working for reform of our prisons and criminal justice system. Candles has organized a number of vigils in the past several years, including two in front of Governor Cuomo's mansion in Westchester.

We will return in even greater numbers to protest outside his mansion on Saturday, September 17, 2016, to remind him that mercy has a place in today's Industrial Prison Complex.

Comfortable buses will leave from 10th Avenue between 16th and 17th Streets at 5:00pm sharp and return after the vigil. Round trip tickets are \$15. We ask those who can help us to defray costs to pay more. Nobody will be turned away for lack of funds.

If you wish to drive yourself or take public transportation, please seek directions here:
<https://goo.gl/maps/fSRcAQdTS2m>