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Updates for January 31st

16 Jan - Is Marxism Relevant? Some Uses and Misuses

We're sure David would love to communicate with people about ideas in this long, new article he wrote. We included part one in the last round of updates and announcements.

MORE:

Revolutionary Vision

The prospects for humanity are not as grim as our historical and contemporary problems would imply, and Marxist theory can be helpful in unlocking today's revolutionary potential. The "Marxists" were wrong in insisting the revolution would be made by the working classes of the imperial nations. Those of us inspired by how the national liberation movements lit up the world were overly optimistic about their potential to debilitate imperialism and move quickly to building socialism. In a way both errors came from a failure to recognize how much capitalism is a world economy, even while political realities necessitated fighting these battles out on the national terrains. Today's world is characterized by a major contradiction between the now global organization of production and the continuation of political and cultural formations on the national level.

Marx saw that capitalism was moving in a global direction. The Communist Manifesto (1848) says, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." Capital was intended to be the first part of a series of works (never completed) projected to end with a volume on the world market.

But Marx's own views were mixed and in flux as to what degree that globalization would bring industrialization to the peripheries or alternatively exploit them for agricultural products, as was happening to colonial Ireland. Similarly, while not uniform, much of his writing implied a vision that workers of all nations, genders, and ages would increasingly find themselves in similar situations: poorly paid and unskilled appendages to the relentless machines of industrial production, with their jobs and lives made increasingly precarious via a large reserve army of labor. In contrast, the world today is one of multiple and tremendous variations in life experiences, income, power of workers in different jobs and locations. The biggest divide is between North and South, but within each of those spheres there's a multiplicity of divisions and fragmentations in workers' roles and circumstances. To assess this situation it helps to first correct a prevailing, gross misconception about Marx's theory of revolution.

Mainstream political science when I went to college, and probably still today, dismissed Marx's theory of revolution in about one paragraph. The refutation went that it was based on his prediction of the immiseration of the proletariat: capitalism's drive to lower wages, the way advanced machinery eliminated jobs, and the periodic economic crises would all push the conditions of the workers down to bare subsistence or below. That, supposedly, was the situation that would lead the proletariat to rise up. But clearly, the professors would intone, the workers have never been better off. Maybe that has to be modified now with stagnating real wages since 1980, but most people with jobs in the U.S. are not being pushed below subsistence level, and many sectors are still living fairly well.

The standard truisms are radically untrue in two basic ways.

1. **Capitalism is a global economy, which undermines the very survival of the vast majority of workers, who reside in the Global South (along with many in the Global North)—whether small farmers and agricultural workers, laborers in mines and factories, or the hundreds of**

millions in the informal sector eking out existences in sweatshops or scavenging in garbage dumps. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster estimate the global reserve army of labor as 2.3 billion people.[i] Some 4.3 billion, 60% of the world's population, live on less than \$5 a day, 1.2 billion of whom are living on less than \$1.25 a day. For these billions of human beings life is precarious indeed.

2. **Marx's theory of revolution was never based simply on immiseration.** If oppression were enough, it would have been the peasants who overthrew feudalism. They did have many heroic rebellions, but back then it was the bourgeoisie who led the revolution that created the new society. The reason was that new forces of production had been emerging involving dynamic trade routes and a proliferating number of commodities made in workshops. Feudalism, with power and control residing in landed estates, became a barrier to this growing trade and "manufacture" (initially meaning produced by hand). The bourgeoisie was the revolutionary class because they could reorganize society in a way that unchained this emerging commodity- and trade-based mode.

As capitalism matured, it in turn created increasingly social forces of production. Large numbers of people were brought together to work in giant factories. Since a varied number of processes had to be coordinated, communication and transportation systems were created that closely connected people across nations and continents. **For Marx, the central contradiction of capitalism was between this increasingly social production and the prevailing private appropriation, the control of it all by a small minority for their own profit.** As this tension grew, it got expressed in society in a range of ways—economic crises, wars, labor struggles, political upheavals. The workers who produced the wealth found themselves in increasingly precarious circumstances.

The proletariat was the revolutionary class because they were the social class; they were the ones who could reorganize society on the social basis needed to overcome the mounting crises and move forward. Even though they had to compete against each other for jobs, they were the ones brought together, in large numbers and with increasingly complicated interaction, to work together. In addition, as they faced harsh conditions, they learned to join together in collective action to form unions, carry out strikes, become politically active. In one way this emergence was qualitatively different from all past transformations: for the first time in history the revolutionary class consisted of the vast majority and the most exploited. They embodied the potential for reorganizing society on an egalitarian basis that would eventually abolish class divisions altogether.

Socialization vs. Fragmentation

Today, socialization of production has proceeded to an almost unimaginable degree. When you buy an iPhone, the coltan ore was mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; over a hundred different components were made in countries such as South Korea, Singapore and Japan; the parts were assembled in China; the apps were written in Silicon Valley; the advertising campaign designed on Madison Avenue; the financing arranged on Wall Street; and the call-in service centers set up in Mumbai. (One of many ways this arrangement is very anti-social is the environmental costs of all the global transports involved.)

But the same example shows how capitalism has moved in the exactly opposite direction of putting workers of all nations and backgrounds into a common situation. We now have unprecedented fragmentation with a mind-numbing variety of different roles, pay levels, statuses, circumstances. Patriarchy and white supremacy provide major structural differences, but that's not all. Each of those blocks of this prison has a number of different floors and cells within it—giving us a multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions. We've noted that rulers assiduously cultivate tribal, ethnic and religious antagonism. In addition, even within the working class of a given nation, there are major differences in role, pay and status ranging from high tech honchos to home health aides. In some ways the high rates of

exploitation of people of color and women throughout the world support the pay and status of large swaths of workers in parasitic sectors in the centers—like advertising, finance, the military industrial complex, the criminal justice apparatus—engendering their backward sense of superiority and thereby their loyalty to the system

In the U.S., a clear political recognition of the multiple ways people are oppressed and how they intersect emerged out of the women of color movement in the late 1970s. Some critics felt that such an articulation was divisive and ran counter to the universality of all people, or at least of the vast majority who were working class. (Of course most of these women of color were working class.) Certainly what's now called "identity politics" can be divisive if and when it shifts the focus from fighting the system as a whole to simply having comfortable cultural enclaves and when it's centered in distinctions from other oppressed sectors. At the same time, it's healthy and necessary for those who are oppressed to be the ones who articulate their issues and aspirations and how those different oppressions intersect in various people in a range of ways. The white and male dominated unions and political organizations were not universalist. **Real unity, real universalism must be built from the bottom up. Raising those concerns isn't divisive; what's divisive, and perniciously so, is racism, sexism, elitism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism.**

Activists with this perspective have articulated that our fight is against capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy—which is a good way to capture those pernicious structures that reinforce each other. But we need to be explicit that our framework isn't simply within the U.S.; we are fighting a global system of imperialism, which ruthlessly exploits 3/4 of humankind, while also recklessly destroying the environment.

Toward a Humane and Sustainable Future

Our situation today entails the most colossal contradiction between social production and private appropriation. We have the integration, involving almost instantaneous means of global communication, of the efforts of hundreds of millions of workers controlled by the mega-rich few who push the majority to mere subsistence or below and who wreak havoc on the earth as a habitat for humanity and countless other species. The macabre irrationality of the system is expressed in inexcusable waste alongside massive deprivation, incessant wars, periodic economic crises, the breakdown of earlier generations' sense of community and comity, and more. Never have we had a greater ability to meet human needs; never have so many suffered.

The challenge for revolutionaries is to build unity on a principled and lasting basis. That hasn't been achieved by denying differences. The long march to human liberation must smash through each of the many walls of oppression. Nor can we rely on economic depressions to do the job for us. History has shown that the imperial rulers can take white working class frustrations from economic stress and redirect the anger by means of fascist scapegoating of the racial "other."

The current situation is dangerous and daunting, but not cause for despair. If we don't fight, we're doomed. If we do fight, we have a chance, especially given all the unpredictable twists and turns of history. As ferocious as imperialism may be, it's also unstable and volatile. The great, if far from fully tapped, power on our side is that the vast majority have a fundamental and increasingly urgent interest in revolutionary change. I'm certainly not able to outline a grand strategy, but I want to mention a couple of key elements, some initial wisps that are potential precursors toward forming the mighty, cleansing wind we need.

Overall I don't think we're still in the era of national liberation. The challenges of moving out of underdevelopment may be too much for small and/or poor countries given imperial attacks and the inequities of the world market. One counter-strategy would be to build regional blocs—say much of Africa or of Latin America—to be big enough to largely replace investments and trade from the North. Given the

range of political regimes and interests involved, forming such a bloc is extremely difficult. And imperialism has targeted any government that leads in that direction, regardless of whether it is authoritarian (e.g., Qaddafi in Libya) or democratic (e.g., Chavez in Venezuela).

I still believe, emphatically, that the front line of struggle is between imperialism and the peoples of the South. That's where the horror of contemporary capitalism is most glaring, where the consciousness has been highest, where the confrontations have been the most intense. Although we don't hear much about them in the corporate media, thousands of promising indigenous, women's, environmental, food sovereignty, and workers' (very much including China) struggles are in motion around the world.[ii] A few examples include women's cooperatives reclaiming land for local food needs in the Rishi Valley in southern India; the Mangrove Association fighting to protect the environment in Lower Lempa, El Salvador; the democratic and women-empowering Rojava Revolution in northern Syria; the Unist'ot'en indigenous encampment resisting Canada's tar sands and fracking projects; community efforts to develop food sovereignty in Kenya; and the Via Campesina union of peasants and small farmers from 73 countries. I don't know how this myriad of little rivulets might come together to form a mighty stream, but they are beginning to irrigate the soil for revolutionary shoots to grow.

Within the U.S. in this period, Black Lives Matter is especially needed and exciting. We also have a range of other promising efforts on the environment, the criminal justice system, LGBTQ equality and more. We're still grappling with how to form a vision that brings together these disparate efforts as well as with how to build organizations that are both democratic and effective, even when under intense pressure.

The two needed elements I'll mention are that all forms of oppression have to be challenged and that internationalism is a necessary cutting edge. Whatever we can do to blunt the attacks emanating from our country can make a big difference for embattled movements in the Global South. Far from solidarity being us deigning to help them, it's their struggles that are cutting out a path toward a more humane and sustainable world for all of us. The mounting catastrophe of climate change—mainly caused by profligacy in the North but most lethal in the South—is an issue that can unite all the oppressed against this clear and present danger.

Conclusion

Many of the examples of Marxist-Leninist formations make it tempting to echo Marx in saying, "I'm not a Marxist." [iii] I'm not if Marxism is understood as a pat dogma, as small sects vying to claim leadership of the movement and carrying out political debates by citing opposing quotes from old texts, and especially when it's used as a "revolutionary" rationale for continuing white and male domination. At the same time, I would encourage today's activists not to lose a treasure trove in both method and many specifics of analysis by dismissing Marxism out of hand. Of course there are still many unresolved issues. One in particular that has divided anarchists and Marxists is form of organization. I didn't address that above because I don't have much that's helpful to say, except that so far both models seem inadequate to me.

The question looming over us is how to overcome the multiplicity of stratifications, fragmentations, and antagonisms that divide the vast majority of humankind who are oppressed and exploited. This challenge requires engaged, thoughtful practice and creative thinking by all of us. Regardless of whether one is steeped in Marxism, the reality is that we face the gargantuan earthquake fault of the contradiction between social production and private appropriation. The global forces that are now in play are of such magnitude that the continued control by a few whose main goal is profit constitutes an existential threat for humanity. The challenge is to overcome the divisions. To do so in solidarity with the Global South is crucial, to make a difference in their prospects and at the same time for us to be able to advance at home.

Given how world capitalism is hurtling toward ecological crises, we can join Marx's, "There's a world to win" with "There's a world to save!"

About the author: **David Gilbert** has been an activist since the early 1960s and a New York State political prisoner since 1981. David would love to hear your feedback. Feel free to write to him at:

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The photo of David is by Breno Altman.

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Endnotes:

[i] "Marx's Theory of Working-Class Precariousness: Its Relevance Today," *Monthly Review*, April 2016. They provide a much fuller and more nuanced discussion than mine above of the concept and how it plays out in the global economy.

[ii] A number of such struggles are briefly described in the 2016 *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners* calendar.

[iii] As reported by Engels, Marx said this when in the midst of a frustrating political struggle with some sectarian French Marxists.

17 Jan - Sentences Commuted for Chelsea Manning and Oscar López Rivera

Thanks to the persistent and bold organizing of Chelsea and Oscar, and their outside supporters, former president Obama commuted their sentences and both are scheduled for release on May 17.

MORE:

January 17th - On Chelsea Manning's Freedom

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

A grassroots effort led by committed activists, which was bolstered by human rights campaigners and prominent individuals, pushed President Barack Obama's administration to free Chelsea Manning.

The United States Army whistleblower was sentenced to military prison for 35 years. She was convicted of offenses stemming from her decision to provide WikiLeaks with over a half million U.S. government documents, which exposed war crimes, diplomatic misconduct, and other instances of wrongdoing and questionable acts by U.S. officials.

But now, on May 17, Manning will be released from Leavenworth prison in Kansas. She will get what she requested from Obama: a "first chance at life," as a "proud woman who is transgender" that has matured greatly during an arduous and difficult journey from all-source intelligence analyst to someone inspiring to millions.

"Today's fantastic news goes a long way to making amends for the brutal treatment Chelsea was illegally subjected to while awaiting trial at the Quantico Marine Brig. It's tragic that Chelsea had to spend 7-years imprisoned for releasing documents that should never have been classified in the first place, and were

clearly in the public interest,” stated Chelsea Manning Support Network co-founder Jeff Paterson. “All of us who worked on Chelsea’s behalf are overjoyed.”

Manning’s case was not always well known to the public. The establishment press in the U.S. barely showed interest in her court-martial at Fort Meade until her case reached trial. On the other hand, there were a handful of people, including myself, who were present at nearly every stage—including critical phases where she challenged her unlawful pretrial punishment at the Marine brig at Quantico.

Independent journalist Alexa O’Brien, Courthouse News journalist Adam Klasfeld, Associated Press reporter David Dishneau, and courtroom sketch artist Clark Stoeckley shared many moments with me observing what unfolded.

Some journalists like Ed Pilkington of The Guardian and Julie Tate, a researcher for The Washington Post, were there most of the trial. CNN had a producer, who tended to fall asleep in the back of the media center. The New York Times sometimes found it worthwhile to send a journalist, like Charlie Savage. There were advocates, who penned eloquent commentaries every so often. However, it was up to AP and alternative journalists to get the story of what was happening with Manning day-to-day out to the public.

Freedom Of The Press Foundation helped ensure there were transcripts made available to the public by crowdfunding a stenographer, since the Army refused to publish their own transcripts of proceedings. This made our job much easier.

Another organization that deserves recognition is the Center For Constitutional Rights. Their efforts in military court on behalf of journalists challenged the Army’s lack of transparency. Because of their work, we forced the Army’s hand, and they granted us access to court documents, including decisions issued by military judge, Col. Denise Lind.

Before Shadowproof, I worked for Firedoglake editor-in-chief Jane Hamsher, who hosted me at her house in Washington, D.C., for many weeks. That includes a nearly three-month span during her trial. It made it possible for me to devote my journalism career to covering Manning, and during the court-martial, I collaborated with journalist Greg Mitchell on a book about her case.

In fact, thanks to Chelsea Manning, I met Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg and had the privilege of driving him home from Fort Meade one night.

*

As Manning’s attorneys previously pointed out, she received the same sentence as a “service member who wished to sell classified information for money.” She received a much harsher sentence than General David Petraeus, who pled guilty to disclosing classified information to a former mistress and biographer. Petraeus also lied to the FBI when he was questioned about his crime.

“In the pantheon of cases involving disclosures motivated by whistleblowing, Pfc. Manning’s is far and away the most severe sentence ever adjudged. In the last five years alone, federal prosecutors have prosecuted more whistleblowers than at any time,” her attorneys argued.

Manning took responsibility for her actions. She did not have to describe to the public in a military court why she released the “Collateral Murder” video, military incident reports from Iraq and Afghanistan, diplomatic cables, and files on Guantanamo Bay detainees. However, she felt she owed it to not only herself but all of us.

On the “Collateral Murder” video, Manning shared, “The most alarming aspect of the video to me, however, was the seemingly delightful bloodlust they appeared to have. They dehumanized the individuals they were engaging and seemed to not value human life by referring to them as “dead bastards” and congratulating each other on the ability to kill in large numbers.”

Manning recognized the United States entered a state of permanent war. She felt it important to give citizens information on counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan so we could scrutinize the government’s obsession with “capturing and killing human targets on lists.” She deliberately intended to spark a debate on the role of the U.S. military and our foreign policy.

The cables were released because, as Manning said, she believed the world might be a better place if it embraced “open diplomacy” and avoided making “secret pacts and deals with and against” countries.

Files on Guantanamo detainees were disclosed because she recognized the vast majority of individuals in detention were innocent. They were “low level foot soldiers that did not have useful intelligence and would be released if they were still held” in theaters of war.

Very few people supported Manning when it became known that she was the person responsible for making disclosures to WikiLeaks. With President Obama’s action, millions celebrate her release.

Her commutation comes at the end of a two-term presidency, which made aggressive actions against whistleblowers a cornerstone of the administration’s policy. More individuals were prosecuted for leaks under the Espionage Act than all previous presidents combined.

NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden remains isolated in Russia with the Obama administration ever committed to the notion that he must come back home and face justice in a federal courtroom, despite the fact that the Justice Department has ensured people like Snowden cannot make whistleblowing arguments as part of their defense.

CIA whistleblower Jeffrey Sterling is in prison in Littleton, Colorado.

Plus, on the same day Obama commuted Manning’s sentence, he pardoned General James Cartwright, who leaked information on the Stuxnet virus. He is a high-ranking official, but unlike Manning, he will not spend a single day in prison.

Mercy is all that Manning asked of President Barack Obama. Mercy is all that Obama needed to show Manning. President Obama showed Manning mercy because millions spoke up for Manning and made a difference.

The last year was particularly devastating for Manning. She attempted to commit suicide at least two times. She was punished by the Army for her suicide attempt, even though what she really needed was access to mental health treatment. So, there is a compelling argument behind the idea that those involved in the grassroots campaign, which convinced Obama to free her, saved her life.

While Manning and the public wait for her release in May, there will be vitriol from politicians and journalists, who lack a basic level of human decency. They will attempt to “educate” the public about why Obama made the wrong decision. But the truth is and has always been on Manning’s side.

History will, if it has not already, vindicate Chelsea Manning. It will never vindicate the actions of President George W. Bush, who lied America into a war in Iraq. It will never vindicate generals or CIA officers responsible for torture and crimes against humanity. It will never vindicate the political elites, who conspire to conceal corruption and wrongdoing and do not face any accountability for their actions.

January 17th - Oscar Lopez Rivera to Be Freed After 36 Years in US Prison

The United States government announced Tuesday the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera, who has been imprisoned in the U.S. for 36 years for his struggle to free Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule.

Outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama commuted Lopez' sentence, which will expire on May 17, according to a list of commutations announced by the White House.

Celebrations started almost immediately, while Clarissa Lopez, daughter of Lopez, will hold a press conference Wednesday at 10 a.m. in reaction to his release at the Roberto Clemente Coliseum in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Lopez was born in Puerto Rico in 1943 and upon returning to Chicago after serving in the Vietnam War, he joined the struggle for Puerto Rican rights and participated in acts of civil disobedience and other actions.

In 1976, he joined the clandestine fight for the independence of Puerto Rico as a member of the Armed Forces of National Liberation. In 1981, he was captured by the FBI and accused of "conspiracy" for his militancy in the FALN.

At the time of his capture, he proclaimed himself a prisoner of war, protected in the first protocol of the Geneva Convention of 1949. The protocol protects Lopez from prosecution for having been arrested in a conflict against colonial occupation.

The U.S. did not recognize Lopez' demand and sentenced him to 55 years in prison and after an alleged attempt to escape, the sentence was increased to 70 years in prison, 12 of which he spent in solitary confinement.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1999 offered him a pardon, along with 13 FALN members who accepted, but Lopez rejected it because it included completing 10 more years in jail. Leaders from around the world, as well as human rights organizations, have demanded Lopez' release for many years.

On June 18, 2012, the U.N. Decolonization Committee approved a resolution, promoted by Cuba, which called for the recognition of Puerto Rico's right to independence and self-determination and urged the release of all pro-independence prisoners in the United States.

January 18th - ProLibertad's Statement on Oscar's release!

The ProLibertad Freedom Campaign is proud to announce the commutation of Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera's sentence. Oscar is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, May 17, 2017. We assume that his first stop will be Chicago before returning home to Puerto Rico, but we will confirm those details later.

As this statement is being written, we are overwhelmed by this incredible victory. A victory 35 years in the making! A victory of the people, who protested, marched, recited poetry, wrote letters, made phone calls, tweeted, emailed, picketed, marched in parades, and keep hope alive through militancy, action, and consistency. This is a well earned victory, yet we must be vigilant.

It's not over until Oscar walks out of Terre Haute:

We must keep our eye on Oscar's case and make sure that we respond in kind if incoming President Donald Trump tries to impede Oscar's release. Despite the fact that Presidential pardons and commutations are difficult to undue, Trump and his cronies can try to block Oscar's release, we must be united and focused in our response, if Trump attempts anything.

Oscar will need our support now more than ever:

We must begin fundraising for Oscar's return to "freedom." ProLibertad is going to be setting up a crowd sourcing fund, organize several events, and implement other means of raising money for Oscar's transition out of prison. We're challenging our allies and supporters to help us raise \$5000 between now and May.

18 Jan - Animal Activist Nicole Kissane Sentenced to 21 Months in Prison

On January 17 Nicole Kissane's non-cooperating plea agreement was accepted by the judge, and she was sentenced to 21 months in federal prison and three years of supervised release.

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Nicole self surrendered on January 18. While this is a difficult day for Nicole, marking the end of a long period of resistance and contemplation, it is the beginning of a new chapter. We will keep you updated about her whereabouts during her transfer and when she reaches her final destination.

The transition from freedom to incarceration can be a challenging one, particularly in the first few months. So now more than ever, we need to make sure she has books to read, letters to respond to, and money in her support fund so she can purchase vegan food and toiletries. Please keep a close eye on her support site (<http://SupportNicole.com>) and facebook page (<https://facebook.com/supportnicoleandjoseph>) for addresses and updates as they become available.

She's in there for all of us, we are out here for her.

January 25th - Nicole Kissane is Now in Custody and is Awaiting Your Letters

This has been a long, turbulent process for Nicole. We have written the following statement to provide some context for what happened at her sentencing on Tuesday and to shed some light on how the legal process has been for Nicole in general. We hope it will clear up any questions you may have.

An article titled "New plea deal reached in anti-fur rampage," that was published on December 28, 2016 in *The San Diego Union-Tribune* and subsequently reprinted elsewhere, stated the following in reference to Nicole Kissane's June 20, 2016 sentencing appearance, "Both prosecutors and the defense said they arrived at the agreement because Kissane played a smaller role in the rampage than Buddenberg, and they accused Buddenberg of dominating the younger Kissane and leading her into trouble." This narrative is one that Nicole Kissane firmly rejects.

Just one week before her June 20 sentencing date, Nicole's public defender informed her that he intended to argue that Nicole took a smaller role in the actions leading to her arrest and the arrest of Joseph Buddenberg. She refused to commit to this version of events and pleaded with him to not state these mistruths in court on her behalf. Unfortunately her pleas fell on deaf ears. After Judge Burns refused to sign the deal, her lawyer acknowledged in court that he had gone against Nicole's wishes.

This narrative was again strongly put forth at Nicole's sentencing on January 17. The prosecution and the defense repeatedly suggested that Joseph was more culpable for their actions and he influenced Nicole to take part. Her lawyer acknowledged in court that Nicole was uncomfortable with this portrayal and wished

to take responsibility for her own actions, yet he continued to attempt to shift blame to Joseph throughout the hearing. It is clear from the actions of her lawyers that they have not taken Nicole's wishes or convictions seriously at any time during this process and they have openly admitted to this in court. While fighting for her freedom, Nicole has also had to struggle with her lawyers. This is a battle she lost time and time again.

Nicole was sentenced on January 17 to twenty-one months in federal prison. Now begins a new period in her life, one that will be met with uncertainty and struggle through situations of confinement and isolation. This is the crucial time for those of us who do understand Nicole's principles and politics to stand by her — and we must continue to do in so in the next days, weeks, and years. We must step up for Nicole.

Please check back regularly for updates on how Nicole is doing and how you can best support her. Sending cards, letters, and articles that you think she might like will always be welcome at each and every facility they may send her to. We are calling on supporters from around the world to remind her while she's locked up that she has never left our thoughts or hearts! Thank you for all of your continued support.

18 Jan - Leonard Peltier Denied Clemency

Len Foster (Diné), the longtime spiritual leader of Leonard Peltier, says President Barack Obama missed an opportunity for reconciliation with Native Americans when he refused to grant the Petition for Clemency for Peltier, who has been in prison for over 40 years.

MORE:

by Levi Rickert (*Native News Online*)

Earlier on Tuesday, Peltier's name appeared on the January 18 list of commutations denied by Obama as issued by the Office of the Pardon Attorney. Peltier's attorney Martin Garbus was also notified.

"I really thought Obama 'got it' when it comes to Native Americans. I thought he saw the need for some healing to take place for Native Americans with this country. I think he missed an opportunity for reconciliation to take place," Foster told Native News Online on Tuesday evening. "I am very sad. Leonard Peltier does not deserve to die in prison. It serves no purpose at this point."

Earlier Tuesday, Peltier said in an email: "If I should not [receive clemency] then after we are locked in for the day I will have a good cry and then pick myself up and get myself ready for another round of battles until I cannot fight [any] more. So, don't worry. I can handle anything after over 40 years."

The International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee said in a release after the announcement:

It's hard to bear such a blow, though. And make no mistake — Leonard has been hit hardest of all. But let's not mourn so very long. Instead, let's move ever forward. Channel your grief and anger in a positive way. Remember that Leonard still needs our help. He needs quality health care and a transfer to a medium security facility, among other things. We'll always work towards freedom for Leonard, but these actions may help to make his life more bearable until freedom is won.

Now, we urge you to write to Leonard and help to keep his spirits up. Tell him you won't give up, that you'll walk the rest of the way with him.

18 Jan - On Chris Monfort's Passing

On January 18, a comrade from Puget Sound ABC received a call from the devastated mother of Chris Monfort. She told me he'd been found dead in his prison cell that morning. Below are that comrade's words on the passing of one of our political prisoners.

MORE:

Department of Corrections pigs at Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla said that he was found unresponsive at 7:45 am, cause of death unknown. I am so glad I found out through his mom, instead of the police-worshipping, people-hating mass media. In terms of friends, Chris was about quality over quantity, and very few people had his back when he transitioned from “civilian” to “citizen.” That said, I am writing this so you can find out a little bit of who he was in the words of his friend...rather than the police-worshipping, people-hating mass media.

Christopher John Monfort was a complicated man. He was the son of a hardened Black father he barely knew, and a white mother who loved him as dearly as any mother could. He grew up in violence. He was bullied by Native youth in the land the colonizer calls Alaska. Then, he was bullied by crackers in a small Indiana town that was once the headquarters of the Klan (and in which he often found himself the only Black persxn). Finally, he was bullied by other young Black men in his Denver, Colorado high school. He idolized the “founding fathers” of this country. He also idolized Malcolm X and Che Guevara (and toward the end of his life, Huey P. Newton and George Jackson). Zinn’s “A People’s History of the United States” was a favorite book of his, and “Tropic Thunder” was one of his favorite movies. He loved music, and played the guitar... not giving a fuck how good he did or did not sound, but immersing himself in the sheer joy of jamming out with an instrument. He loved Rage Against the Machine AND Radiohead, and I had the honor of singing the song “Reckoner” to him, through the glass of a King County Jail visiting room, as he’d not heard any music in 6 years by that point...

He loved fighter jets, yet hated war (he was initially politicized through protesting Bush and the invasion of Iraq). He also loved cartoons, beer, weed and video games. Handsome and charismatic, he had his fair share of lovers, but was equally happy in the company of his two cats (with whom he would turn on colored lights, fire up the stereo and have dance parties in his apartment). He was hilarious, and had the most scathing sense of humor I’ve encountered. He was a great friend, and would give you the shirt off his back. His modest collection of buddies will attest to this even today, despite their feelings about “what he did...”

He worked as a truck driver, security guard and a host of other odd jobs to make ends meet, though his final career aspirations were in the realm of juvenile justice (he volunteered as a counselor, and threw himself completely into the work) and, eventually, law. He excelled in his classes and had a bright future, even if he got a bit of a late start in life. Academically and otherwise, he was brilliant.

He believed in the US Constitution, and was a Left-leaning Libertarian (which led to many a spirited discussion between the two of us). He said he wished he’d learned more about anarchism when on the outside. He believed strongly in Jury nullification, and in the role of police, judges and even the highest level elected officials as “our” employees, who must take direction from us... or else! When he witnessed on video the brutal beating of 15 year old Black womxn Malika Calhoun by one police pig, while the other stood by watching, he knew the time for “or else” had arrived...

He took up his role as “citizen” with professionalism, aplomb and no reservation, yet he abandoned the plan for which he spent months preparing because he would not risk creating unintended casualties. His need to act overtook his better judgment, and his final act of guerrilla war against the police resulted in his near assassination at the hands of the state, and, ultimately a paraplegic life in a cage with no hope for release.

Atheist, and hyper-pragmatic, he did not fear death, nor did he expect to survive his “hunting” mission. He very vocally intended to end his own life, rather than live a sub-par existence of constant physical pain and

restricted movement, but would not let the state kill him, on general principle. We have yet to determine if he died by his own hand. I take consolation in that he (unlike many Black Panther and Black Liberation Army warriors in whose steps he somewhat followed) did NOT know more years in the cages than outside of them, and that he does not have to endure any more years of pain.

Though I set out supporting him because of what he did, I came love him like a brother for who he was as well... and he told me countless times how mutual the feeling was. I came to know so much about him, unfortunately, through invasive trial proceedings than his own desire to be candid about his past. Regardless, the man I came to know over the course of three years was so much more than a “cop killer,” though he took pride in this act even in his final days... and wanted only to see more citizens “speak to the bullies in the only language they understand.” He was able to express genuine remorse for taking a father away from his child, without regret for doing what needed to be done. Like I said, Chris was complicated.

He was the brother I never had, and the reality of his death has yet to truly hit me. In my heart, I am still looking forward to renewing his “Combat Aircraft” subscription, and playing RISK with him next visit, even though the rational part of my mind knows this will never happen. But Chris wouldn’t want any of us to be inconvenienced by his death, nor spend time dwelling on it. So I will close by saying this: Chris loved Emma Goldman, and thought her “a great American.” If there were more “Americans” like Chris himself, this country would be worth the lives people like him have given to make it truer to it’s supposed ideals.

Rest in Power, citizen.

21 Jan - Support Comrades Arrested in DC!

On Friday, January 20, more than 200 comrades were arrested in DC during the protests against Trump and the hatred and bigotry he represents.

MORE:

They risked their freedom not only to confront individual fascists, but the fascist agenda itself—and to show that no matter who is elected, we are ungovernable. Throughout the day, hundreds have gathered to receive the arrestees as they are released from jail: as each person is released, at times escorted by riot cops, the crowd cheers and chants as they welcome them back. But many will be facing serious legal battles in the coming months. Let’s show them we are willing to support them in return for the courage they have shown for us! You can donate to the bail and legal support funds by going to disruptj20.org/legal-fund

22 Jan - Statement from Marius Mason for Jan. 22 Events in Solidarity With Trans Prisoners

Below is a letter from Marius. Please distribute widely.

MORE:

Dear Family and Friends,

This has been a strange and intense year, both for me personally and for so many others as this world has changed significantly. It has been an inspiration to witness the Black Lives Matter movement as it confronts police brutality and to draw wisdom from that. It has been an inspiration to witness the federation of peoples supporting the Standing Rock Tribe as they confront the ecologically suicidal energy policy of this country, and to draw wisdom from that. And we have borne witness to the struggle for freedom and dignity that so many who have been forced to leave their homes in order to escape war, poverty and violence and in the hopes of finding a more open society where they can put down roots. Though, sadly, all refugees find themselves at risk of prejudice and abuse, trans people have found that they experience a

unique discrimination and isolation as they cross borders, and find themselves set apart in detention centers, unable to access medical care and suffering abuse. We continue to gather and hear the stories of trans prisoners who continue to be raped and physically brutalized, in an effort to advocate for their safety and protection and to offer our help. We have seen a year where the laws and policies have changed and shifted, sometimes increasing the civil rights and access to care for trans folks, and sometimes identifying them for particular discrimination and criminalization through the new “bathroom laws” and local ordinances limiting their protection from job and housing discrimination. The United States has a history of civil rights being fought for and lost in a constant dance of egalitarians confronting bigotry, in all of its many forms. We must remain determined and implacable.

As we prepare for a new administration to influence the massive system of incarceration that holds such a large fraction of the population in thrall, we must re-commit ourselves to standing strong for the rights of trans prisoners who will definitely find themselves facing new challenges to the recent changes in healthcare offered to trans prisoners. We must be vigilant and active, so that what few advances have been made are not rescinded. For this reason, it is more important than ever for there to be a lively discussion possible between those who live and work on either side of the walls that separate us. By coming together and building community, by taking the time to develop connection through whatever means of communication are possible – incarcerated trans folks become less vulnerable to attack and our communities (both LGBT and straight) become stronger as we work to connect and protect each other.

I want to thank all of you who wrote and who organized for supporting incarcerated trans people today. This means so much to me, that I and others like me can be supported. I find great comfort in helping support others who, like me, find themselves attempting to transition in prison. This year has brought a lot of hope for me, as I was finally approved for hormone therapy and began taking testosterone shots on September 14th. The changes have been subtle, and this will be a long road having been so long delayed – but I am hopeful that within a year, I will be allowed to begin the surgeries I need to be medically re-assigned. But there is no guarantee that this policy will stay in place, and it is imperative for all trans folks to be supported in the kind of health care they need (whatever that may be, not everyone needs the same things or anything at all, other than recognition). I also think that as a community that does prisoner support for our comrades behind bars, that we must make sure that all incarcerated folks have access to healthcare, whether that be trans identity related or not. I wish so much that I could be more present with you all. It gives me so much hope and strength to know that you are out there for us inside – just as I am here inside for all of you. We are one spirit, many hearts, moving towards freedom and where we will live the dream of the world released from injustice and brutality. I am so proud to be with you today; many, many thanks and I hope to know more of you as we move together towards what 2017 will bring.

23 Jan - Ed Poindexter has heart surgery

Ed Poindexter had heart surgery in December. Ed is serving a life without parole sentence at the Nebraska State Penitentiary for a crime he did not do.

MORE:

by Paul Hammel (*Omaha World-Herald*)

Ed Poindexter, one of two men convicted in a booby trap bombing that killed an Omaha police officer in 1970, is recovering from triple-bypass heart surgery at a state prison.

Poindexter, 72, underwent surgery on Dec. 20 at a Lincoln hospital, a day after reporting that he was unable to breathe.

He and David Rice were sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Omaha Police Officer Larry Minard.

Poindexter and Rice, who later went by the name Mondo we Langa, maintained they were innocent. Advocates call them political prisoners, and claim they were framed using false testimony and faulty evidence because they were leaders of a Black Panther-like militant group. Rice died in March in prison.

Kietryn Zychal, a friend of Poindexter's, visited him Wednesday at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center in Lincoln, where he is being held in the infirmary.

Poindexter, she said, was grateful for his medical care, and hopeful that he could be transferred soon back to his cell at the State Penitentiary, and renew his efforts to prove his innocence.

Due to health care privacy laws, the Nebraska Department of Corrections has declined to comment on the surgery. Under the U.S. Constitution, prisons are required to provide adequate health care to inmates.

23 Jan - Neo-Nazi Richard Spencer Got Punched—You Can Thank the Black Bloc

A dispatch from inside the J20 protests.

MORE:

by Natasha Lennard (*The Nation*)

The transcendental experience of watching Roger Federer play tennis, David Foster Wallace wrote, was one of “kinetic beauty.” Federer’s balletic precision and mastering of time, on the very edge of what seems possible for a body to achieve, was a form of bodily genius. What Foster Wallace saw in a Federer Moment, I see in a video of neo-Nazi Richard Spencer getting punched in the face.

You may have seen it, it’s a meme now, set to backing tracks of Bruce Springsteen, New Order, even a song from Hamilton. The punch, landed by a masked protester on Inauguration Day, lends itself perfectly to a beat. Spencer, who states that America belongs to white men, was in the midst of telling an Australian TV crew in DC that he was not a neo-Nazi, while pointing to his neo-Nazi Pepe the Frog lapel pin. A black-clad figure then jumps into frame, deus ex machina, with a perfectly placed right hook to Spencer’s face. The alt-right poster boy stumbles away, and his anonymous attacker bounds out of sight in an instant. I don’t know who threw the punch, but I know by his unofficial uniform that this was a member of our black bloc that day. And anyone enjoying the Nazi-bashing clip (and many are) should know that they’re watching anti-fascist bloc tactics par excellence—pure kinetic beauty. If you want to thank Spencer’s puncher, thank the black bloc.

The black bloc is not a group but an anarchist tactic—marching as a confrontational united force, uniformed in black and anonymized for security. Once deployed, the tactic has an alchemic quality, turning into a temporary object—the black bloc. On Friday, the bloc I joined in DC numbered well over 500, the largest of its kind since the antiwar protests over a decade prior. As I wrote in advance of the inauguration, if we recognize fascism in Trump’s ascendance, our response must be anti-fascist in nature. The history of anti-fascist action is not one of polite protest, nor failed appeals to reasoned debate with racists, but direct, aggressive confrontation. While perhaps best associated in the United States with the anti-globalization movement’s major summit protests nearly two decades ago, the black bloc is part of the longstanding visual language of international anti-fascism, or antifa. For example, bloc tactics have been used by European anti-fascists marching against neo-Nazis since the 1990s in Germany. The symbolic value of a large black-bloc presence at Trump’s inauguration resided in drawing a connection between anti-Trumpism and anti-fascism.

The “anti-capitalist, anti-fascist bloc,” Friday’s black-bloc march, was just one among a number of direct actions called by organizers of the Disrupt J20 Inauguration Day protests. Unlike Saturday’s vast Women’s March, Disrupt J20 aimed to directly impede, delay, and confront the inaugural proceedings. This message

was delivered with human blockades, smashed corporate windows, trash-can fires, a burning limousine, “Make America Great Again” caps reduced to ashes, and a blow for Richard Spencer. The police responded with fountains of pepper spray, flash-bang grenades, and the mass arrest of over 200 people, most of whom now face felony riot charges. Along with the Women’s March’s joyful scenes of togetherness, the disruptions of J20 should be celebrated as an opening salvo of resistance in the era of Trump.

The black bloc I joined met at Logan Circle, some two miles north of the inauguration parade route. We peered through bandanas to find friends. We gathered in bloc formation behind wood-enforced banners, filled the street, and began to march. The bloc takes care to stay together, move together, and blend together. Within minutes, bottle rockets were shooting skyward and bricks were flying through bank windows. You don’t know who does what in a bloc, you don’t look to find out. If bodies run out of formation to take a rock to a Starbucks window, they melt back to the bloc in as many seconds. Bodies reconciled, kinetic beauty. If that sounds to you like a precondition for mob violence, you’re right. But this is only a problem if you think there are no righteous mobs, or that windows feel pain, or that counter-violence (like punching Richard Spencer) is never valid.

We were heading south when riot cops cut us off just a few blocks from the unimpressive inauguration crowds. We ran, altogether, for some short minutes, which felt long. The Metropolitan Police Department doused us with pepper spray and dispensed flash-bang and smoke grenades, and finally trapped a large section of the bloc against a wall. These members of the black bloc were kettled there for over four hours, forced at various times to form human cubicles around those detainees who could no longer hold their bladders. The bloc never found full force en masse again, but clashes with cops, mild altercations with rowdy Trump supporters, and attacks on property continued throughout the afternoon and evening in fits and starts. At some point, someone punched Spencer. While the over 200 arrestees were held for 24 hours, jail support volunteers waited for them patiently while the Women’s March filled DC streets and then dispersed. The J20 detainees have been released, some with felony rioting charges to be tried in DC Superior Court next month—a harsh prosecutorial reaction that seasoned DC activists had not expected.

Not everyone can participate in a black bloc. Those with a vulnerable immigration status, or arrest records, or good reasons to fear police repression because of the color of their skin, often don’t participate in activities where the risk of arrest is high. Friday’s bloc was by no means all white, but it was predominantly white. If bearers of white privilege can do one thing, it is put ourselves on the line and take risks where others can’t. This was just one tactic. And numerous white participants I knew from Friday place racial justice front and center of their activist work. Disrupt J20 actions also included a series of temporary blockades at inauguration security check points, each representing different points of struggle, from the movement for black lives, to activists declaring “the future is feminist,” to Standing Rock and Indigenous rights, to queer resistance and more. A number of Trump supporters walk sheepishly from a line of blockading protesters shouting, “This checkpoint is closed.” These were small acts, but disobedient ones and the call to be “ungovernable,” which echoed through the Women’s March, will not be answered with obedient behavior.

To talk with any romance for the black bloc risks falling into the worst tropes of bombastic revolutionary writing. We don’t don black masks and become instant revolutionary subjects. We don’t necessarily achieve more with property damage than a larger, more subdued rally achieves. In every case, the standard of achievement depends on the aims of the action, and all of us are far from creating the rupture we want to see in the world. One broken window, or a hundred, is not victory. But nor is over half a million people rallying on the National Mall. Both gain potency only if they are perceived as a threat by those in and around power. And neither action will appear threatening unless followed up again and again with unrelenting force, in a multitude of directions. You don’t have to choose between pink hat and black mask;

each of us can wear both. You don't have to fight neo-Nazis in the street, but you should support those who do.

24 Jan - Blog #40: The Fight for \$15 and Class Struggle by PP Jalil Muntaqim

Jalil was recently moved to a different prison as a result of repression due to his continued activism around Black liberation. The below is a great piece to start a conversation with Jalil.

MORE:

In respect to the fight for minimum wage increase (\$15.00 hr.) and union organizing, I believe it is important we give serious consideration to the socio-political relationship between workers and the bosses/corporate entities. While we cannot oppose the fight to increase the minimum wage, this fight is not isolated from the entire gross inequities found in the capitalist system. Why does it cost so much for food, clothing and housing? Why does it cost so much for traveling and health care and education? It is the answer to these questions that speaks to why the fight for increase in minimum wage becomes necessary.

The bosses argue that because of high wages, the cost of everything else develops, and that is why they want to move businesses to other countries for cheap labor, etc. The mitigating argument is, if wages aren't raised, workers/consumers will not be able to afford the finished product anyway. Furthermore, as underdeveloped countries become more industrialized and technological, those workers will demand better salaries so they can afford the products they make. Ultimately, this is the crisis of capitalism-imperialism with all of its related geopolitical factors of built in crisis; global competition, population displacement, wars, and climate change, etc. The principle problem is the inequal distribution of accumulated wealth!

This is the quandary that appears not to be confronted and addressed full-throttled in building a class struggle toward a mass and popular movement. The fight for \$15.00 minimum wage is merely a stop-gap measure to keep workers' wages on a par with inflation and/or recession, etc. The politics in union organizing have evaporated into simple economic issues ... it seems workers are not being educated or inspired to challenge the system of capitalist-imperialism and disempowerment; no longer is agitation-propaganda forwarding the proposition of workers' ownership of the means and mode of production, i.e. Socialism.

It is unnecessary to reproduce or reiterate the often repeated numbers offered by the former Occupy or Bernie Sanders activists to what degree the 1% of the population reaps enormous profits from workers' labor. But what must be stated repeatedly, if necessary, is the failure of unions and their representatives to educate their members in the ideological determinants of class struggle. Apparently, the unions and their reps have essentially become a "human resource" arm of the bosses/corporations. They simply function as a mechanism to inform the bosses when worker management has reached a crisis and the workers have to be appeased/addressed to alleviate the crisis and continue to produce. The corporate bosses dicker (negotiate) with unions and reps to find the most cost effective medium solution to ensure profitability and workers' satisfaction until the next crisis, etc. If this basic analysis is accurate, when will the time come that workers truly understand the dynamics of class struggle in forging a socialist revolution?

It is obvious that the system of capitalism is capable of adjusting to crisis, and in some cases absorb and adapt to changing socio-economic demands, without changing the concrete fundamentals of the division of labor and the socio-political relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploited and the exploiter. At some point, and hopefully soon, this contradiction will need to be addressed by unions and their representatives as part of an overall mass and popular movement.

I firmly believe that, within the next four years, now that the right wing has successfully managed a political coup d'etat (with the assistance of capitalist roader Putin), the left and progressive forces will need to build a national determination toward class struggle. This particularly means identifying and exposing union and rep collaborators with corporate bosses so they can be ousted. Those unions, their representatives and social activists found to capitulate to the corporate bosses in opposition to building a formidable class struggle toward a mass and popular movement must be exposed and denounced as enemies of the working class!!

The fight for \$15.00 is more than a struggle for minimum wage, it is a struggle to win workers to the overall movement of workers' ownership of the means of production and socialism. Anything short of this are mere stop-gap measures in capitalist crisis management, and the continued super-exploitation of workers.

In the Spirit of Nelson Mandela
in Apartheid NYS Prison System

25 Jan - Gov. Cuomo proposes reduction in visitation days for inmates at state's maximum security prisons

Inmates at the state's maximum security prisons are facing fewer visits from people on the outside under a proposal by Gov. Cuomo.

MORE:

by Kenneth Lovett (*New York Daily News*)

Cuomo in his budget plan unveiled last week tucked in a plan to reduce the number of days in which visits are allowed at maximum-security state prisons to three days a week, down from seven.

Cuomo in his budget book said the change is designed to make visitations at maximum-security prisons "align more closely with medium-security correctional facilities."

But the Assembly Democrats say Cuomo told them during a budget briefing the move would allow the state to save \$2.6 million by eliminating 39 positions.

"I don't think it is the humane thing to do," said Assemblyman David Weprin, the Queens Democrat and new chairman of his chamber's corrections committee. "It's really penalizing the families of inmates."

Weprin also said for inmates, the visitations is their main contact with the outside world and their families.

Jack Beck, of the Correctional Association of New York, called the proposal an "unwise policy change" that could make prisons less safe by taking away an incentive for inmates to be better behaved.

"Visiting is crucial to not only the person inside but also their families," Beck said.

He said many prison rooms are already maxed out under the current schedule. Reducing the days could shorten visits or make it impossible for some to get in at all, Beck warned.

"I see a huge downside with very little gain," he said.

Cuomo budget spokesman Morris Peters said "weekend visitations are the most popular as many families have to travel long distances."

"This change — which comes with the expanded use of video conferencing — would be a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars and match the preexisting policy at medium security DOCCS facilities," Peters said.

26 Jan - Call to Action in Solidarity with Grand Jury Resistance

This a national call for actions against the grand jury, the feds, the pipeline and its world on February 1st.

MORE:

Spread the resistance to the federal grand jury convened to investigate the struggles of Water Protectors at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline! Drop a banner, hold a rally, have a workshop, be ungovernable, lock down, mask up and act up. Our targets are many but our goal is clear.

To the best of our knowledge the grand jury began in December 2016, with the first appearance required by subpoena on January 4th, 2017 at the U.S. District court in Bismarck. It will continue to attempt to interrogate those subpoenaed on a monthly basis for up to 16 more months, or longer should the court approve an extension. But, we gather strength from the long history of grand jury resistance.

On January 4th, Steve Martinez, the first Water Protector known to be subpoenaed to the grand jury, delivered a powerful statement of non-cooperation with the grand jury and federal investigators. Steve was surrounded by a crowd of Water Protectors, friends and comrades outside of the Federal Courthouse in Bismarck. We ushered him to the door, hugging him, thanking him, and holding back tears. We feared we would not see Steve again for months for refusing to testify before the grand jury. A U.S. Marshall took Steve from us and he began the repressive confrontation with the grand jury, alone. We stood outside singing, praying, holding banners, and conversing. We chanted "Blake Snake Killaz." We chanted "Grand Jury Killaz." We demanded that they return Steve to us.

An hour later, Steve walked out of the Federal Courthouse. Cheers tore through the crowd. He stood in front of the building, cops and U.S. Marshals at his back, pulled out his black tie with the words Mni Wiconi in blue lettering ironed on it, and raised his fist. We raised our fists with him. This day we reminded ourselves that solidarity is both a source of strength and a tool of attack. Steve was free and among us. We all embraced him as he smiled, breathed.

Mni Wiconi, Water is Life. Grand Juries and the world they secure are the terrifying, lethal monolith of the state. We remain steadfast in this small victory and hold to our demands: Abolish grand juries. Kill the Black Snake. Allow water to continue to give life as it always has. We are the vibrant, joyous life force in resistance to death, which is all that the state and capital can offer. We stand in solidarity with all grand jury resisters, all land defenders, and all indigenous warriors.

It is unconfirmed if more subpoenas have been issued, but we expect they have and we expect more to come. If the state wants to perform its modern day inquisitions in secrecy, let us unveil them for the world to see.

We ask you to join us in shining the light on this grand jury. Where the state and the pipeline have only death and loss to offer, the vibrancy of our solidarity and fierce spirits show we will never cooperate. We will not stop until the land, its spirits, and its forms are liberated.

26 Jan - Release Aging People in Prisons demand that New York State Bring Our Elders Home!

Adopt a common-sense approach of releasing elder inmates, who are aging in prison, have already served considerable time, and pose little or no threat to the public.

MORE:

The state of New York needlessly confines thousands of senior citizens to cruel and degrading conditions in prison. Since 2000, the number of people over 50 years old in New York State prisons has increased by 98%. The risk of committing a new crime decreases as one gets older, and people over 50 who serve long sentences for serious felonies are the least likely to return to prison after release. Many of the elder populations who are in prison have records of positive achievement in prison and are praised by prison officials as peacemakers and role models. Despite these truths, the vast majority of seniors in prison are routinely denied parole and compassionate release by the state.

As this email comes to you, I am on my way to visit Herman Bell in Comstock prison in upstate New York. Herman, just turned 69 and has been in prison for 43 years, he is one of about 20 former Black Panther and Black Power Movement political prisoners aging in U.S prisons. Shocking, but not unique - he is among more than 10,140 people aged 50 and older in New York prisons.

The need to free Herman is what motivates me to ask you to sign this petition and support our goal to release aging people in prison, end not only mass incarceration but also the racist system of punishing people of color and poor people in perpetuity.

People imprisoned years ago, many due to political involvement and activism during the Black Power movement, are now turning gray. Some suffer from heart disease, hypertension, joint disease, and other age related illnesses. Prisons are looking more and more like nursing homes but with bars, metal detectors, and hyper security used against some of our most vulnerable and valuable populations- our elders.

The aging population currently imprisoned is beyond what the prison system can handle. This is why we are demanding that the state of New York adopt a commonsense approach of releasing older inmates who present no danger to the public.

In the state of New York it costs \$60,000 per year to keep someone in prison, and older prisoners cost taxpayers even more—as much as two to four times that amount—due to added medical costs and the details of armed guards that accompany incarcerated people on trips to hospitals for tests and treatment.

As we know there are stark racial disparities in incarceration rates, with Black and Hispanic people arrested at a rate that is 2 to 3 times their proportion of the general population. The well-documented racial disparities in the criminal justice system are also reflected in the aging prison population. A vastly disproportionate percentage of aging people in prison are Black people, many of whom are political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, and many more.

Join us in demanding that New York state release incarcerated seniors who have already served considerable time and pose little or no threat to public safety. Doing so will restore the harmony of our communities, fulfill our commitment to the human rights of ALL people, and save New York millions of dollars a year. Aging people returning from prison pose little risk to public safety and are prepared to contribute positively to the society. Together, we reject retribution and perpetual punishment as the drivers of our justice system.

Sign the petition: <https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/release-aging-people-in-ny-prisons>

27 Jan - Call to Help Eric King Beat Retaliatory Charges

We expect Eric to face a disciplinary hearing for a write-up filed against him in retaliation for him attempting to hold a guard accountable for their actions in the visiting room.

MORE:

Call in to the Inspector General and Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to demand that they investigate this in order to dismiss the disciplinary charges without upping his points; let them know we will not let this go on without a fight.

Below are some more details of the situation:

On December 19th at FCI Englewood during Eric's visit, Officer Eglington followed Eric into the bathroom and began to harass him while Eric was attempting to use the restroom. When Eric did not respond, Eglington stated that he was going to ruin every visit Eric has and that he was going to have his boys assault Eric's children. Eric and his partner immediately called the Lieutenant on duty and Officer Eglington was removed from his post that night; the officer was also given a warning for his behavior.

During the next visit on December 23rd, Officer Eglington was assigned the same post in the visiting room and the children were forced to interact with him. Because of this, Eric filed all of the internal forms (BP9) required by the facility to request that Eglington get removed from visitation duty so that the children did not have to endure these emotionally stressful interactions and then feel unsafe during their visits. Eric's partner also filed a report with the inspector general. The facility let Eric know that he would have an answer on Friday January 6th regarding his complaints.

However, on January 6th, Eric's partner went to visit him only to be told that he was relocated to Florence awaiting disciplinary charges. The disciplinary charges could further limit visitation/phone calls/access to commissary (which as a vegan is extremely crucial because the BOP only guarantees one fully vegan meal a day). The disciplinary charges will also increase his point level and even possibly relocate him to a disciplinary yard or a prison with much higher security. This would further isolate him from his family, friends, and supporters for the rest of his prison sentence.

It is very clear that these disciplinary charges are retaliation for the incidents that occurred in the visiting room. We CANNOT let them do this to our friend and comrade. We believe that the hearing will be this Friday, January 27, which means we only have a few days to help our dear friend.

Please call the office of the inspector general and the BOP's oversight and review division to let them know that these disciplinary charges are retaliation from his attempt to hold a guard accountable after threatening two children. Ask the Inspector General to investigate the complaint.

Below is a script to follow as well as the contact information for the Inspector General and BOP.

Hi I am calling regarding Eric King, who is a prisoner at FCI Florence. His inmate number is 270-90045. *On December 19th a guard at FCI Englewood threatened Eric's children and internal complaints were filed about the guard's behavior. When those complaints went unanswered, a complaint with the Inspector General was filed on Jan 3rd and then again on January 12th after Eric was brought up on retaliatory charges. So that Eric is not punished for pursuing the proper channels to ensure his and his visitors' safety, we ask that you please investigate the situation in order to dismiss these disciplinary charges without upping his points and respond to these complaints.*

Inspector General, Denver regional office: 303.864.2000

Office of the Inspector General: 202.514.3435
Oversight and Review Division: 202.616.0645

28 Jan - The MOVE 9, The Fraternal Order Of Police, And The Pennsylvania Parole Board

The Justice And Accountability Campaign is still in full swing and is still going strong.

MORE:

We have dedicated 2017 to exposing and working around the puny excuse that the Pennsylvania Parole Board has used to so-called justify denying parole for MOVE members in prison. The excuse over the past four years has been in the words of the Pennsylvania Parole Board, "Parole Denial Reason cited The Risk To The Safety Of The Community At Large." Earlier this month we talked on and exposed the character of Randy Feathers, a former Board Member and known pedophile who resigned from the Pennsylvania Parole Board in the wake of a kiddie porn email scandal with disgraced now former Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane.

This will be an issue that we will continue to expose as time passes, but in the meantime we want to talk further about the Fraternal Order of Police and their connection to the Pennsylvania Parole Board. Since The Beginning of this campaign, we have exposed the connection between law enforcement and their ties to the Parole Board. Randy Feathers and Lloyd White were both former police officers that were not only on the Parole Board, but also voted against parole for the MOVE 9. Leslie Grey, another Board Member with ties to law enforcement and still on the Board, has voted against parole for the MOVE 9. We have said from the beginning it is a conflict of interest to have former police officers, now parole board members, voting over the hearing of inmates whose case revolves around the murder of a police officer.

On June 15, 2016 the Pennsylvania Senate confirmed Mark D. Koch as the newest member of the Pennsylvania Parole Board. We just want to provide people with a little background information to who Mark D. Koch is and his VERY STRONG TIES to law enforcement. In 1980, Mr. Koch started as a police officer with the Department Of Defense. From there, in 1998, Mr. Koch was elected to the Board of the Pennsylvania State Fraternal Order of Police as their treasurer. In 2004 Mr. Koch was elected to two terms as State President of the Fraternal Order of Police, representing more than 40,000 law enforcement officers. After his two terms were completed he then went on to serve as Director of Legislative Affairs for the Fraternal Order of Police until 2012. Also included in his long and storied resume with law enforcement, Mr. Koch is a graduate of the Pennsylvania State Police Northeast Municipal Police Officer Training Academy.

It has been clear for quite some time that the role of the Fraternal Order of Police and not only their public outcry against any form of release for our political prisoners. You can look into the actions of the Fraternal Order of Police in New Jersey and how they were able to work within the courts and have a court ordered parole release for one of our political prisoners overturned. Look at another political prisoner in the federal prison system who has been held twelve years past his maximum release date due to the influence of the Fraternal Order of Police over the United States Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In New York State, not only does the Fraternal Order of Police lobby AGAINST parole for New York State political prisoners, but it also has an active member, Sally Thompson, who sits on their Board of Parole.

So this is nothing new it's just now being exposed to the public through this campaign. In 2018 Delbert Africa, Edward Africa, Janine Africa, Debbie Africa, and Janet Africa will be making yet another appearance before the parole board. The issue of Mark D. Koch poses the strongest conflict of interest as

per his background— he is coming in with a vote already decided against parole for our family. As we watch the Trump administration put things in place for complete global dominance, the Fraternal Order of Police, the Pennsylvania Parole Board, and Philadelphia officials have already set things in place to ensure that MOVE MEMBERS die in prison. All of this has occurred under the watchful eye of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf who has made hypocritical cries about their needing to be reform within the Parole Board, yet he has watched the Fraternal Order of Police time and time again be the decision maker with our families parole denials.

In the month of February there will be a course of action to follow all of this. In the meantime we urge people to share and sign the petition we have aimed at the United States Justice Department, urging them to investigate the case of the MOVE 9. People can sign the petition at <https://www.causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9>

1 Feb - Film Screening: 13th

WHAT: Free Movie Night

WHEN: 7:00pm, Wednesday, February 1

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:

13th is a 2016 American documentary by director Ava DuVernay. Centered on race in the United States criminal justice system, the film is titled after the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which outlawed slavery (unless as punishment for a crime). DuVernay's documentary argues that slavery is being effectively perpetuated through mass incarceration.

The title of Ava DuVernay's documentary 13th refers to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which reads "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States." The progression from that second qualifying clause to the horrors of mass criminalization and the sprawling American prison industry is laid out by DuVernay with bracing lucidity. With a potent mixture of archival footage and testimony from a dazzling array of activists, politicians, historians, and formerly incarcerated women and men, DuVernay creates a work of grand historical synthesis.

5 Feb - Insurgent Notes Public Meeting

WHAT: Insurgent Notes Public Meeting

WHEN: 10:00am-7:00pm, Sunday, February 5, 2017

WHERE: City University of New York Graduate Center, Room 5409 - 365 Fifth Avenue (between 34th & 35th Streets in NYC) (Wheel Chair Accessible)

MORE:

10 AM – 11 AM Registration & Introductions

11 AM – 5 PM Meeting

5 PM – 7 PM Social Get Together (nearby)

Video Participation: Arrangements are being made to allow for video participation of individuals who are not able to travel to NYC for the meeting.

Admission to Graduate Center: Participants must have picture ID.