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Updates for May 23^d

7 May - Six More DAPL Cases Dismissed

Six pipeline protesters who were among 126 arrested on October 22 saw their cases recently dismissed.

MORE:

by Blair Emerson (*Bismarck Tribune*)

Mark Labato, David Pakenham, Ronald Williamson, Lorenzo Serna, Victor Puertas and Sean Jordan were charged with criminal trespass and engaging in a riot in connection with a Dakota Access Pipeline protest in southern Morton County. Some had attached themselves that day to a vehicle found at the construction site.

Bruce Nestor, a Minnesota-based attorney affiliated with a group of attorneys representing the protesters, said he believes the other cases from that day also should be dismissed.

Nestor represented Serna, a journalist with the volunteer media collective Unicorn Riot. Nestor said the Committee to Protect Journalists and other groups concerned with First Amendment rights had written letters arguing that Serna should not have been charged.

“The dismissal does reflect that there was no factual or legal basis to charge him in the first place, regardless of whether he was a journalist,” said Nester, adding he reviewed hours of video and hundreds of photographs from both police and protesters from that day that don’t support the claim that a riot occurred. He also said there wasn’t any proof that the property was posted against trespassing.

“These cases should never have been filed, they never should have been scheduled for trial and they should have been dismissed long ago,” he said.

Morton County Assistant State’s Attorney Brian Grosinger made motions to dismiss the six protesters’ cases. The cases were scheduled to go to trial this week.

Grosinger did not respond to two phone calls and two email requests for comment. Last month, Grosinger did say he would recharge some of the cases that were dismissed. In at least two instances, the defendants have been recharged with physical obstruction of a government function.

Victorio Camp, of South Dakota, faces charges of criminal trespass and engaging in a riot stemming from the Oct. 22 protest. Camp’s attorney Matthew Arthurs said Camp took a plea deal of a single count of disorderly conduct and deferred sentence, because Camp couldn’t risk being recharged and having to make a trip back to North Dakota.

Nestor said he doesn’t believe the state should make plea bargains for those arrested on Oct. 22, who may take the deal because they live far away.

“Now the state is able to extract guilty pleas from some people simply by making an offer that you can’t refuse for someone who lives hundreds of miles away or is no longer in the state,” Nestor said.

A total of 761 arrests were made during the protests, according to the North Dakota Joint Information Center.

9 May - Rest in Power Sekou Kambui

Sekou Kambui, former Black Panther, New Afrikan political prisoner, passed at the age of 68. NYC ABC was honored to have spent time with him and have him join us at one of our political prisoner letter-writing dinners. Rest In Power, Sekou!

MORE:

Our dear brother and Black Panther comrade, Sekou Kambui (born William Turk) made his transition last night. The struggle for freedom defined him in so many ways. After 47 years as a political prisoner in Alabama prisons, and his release in 2012, he can now rest in peace. Farewell my dear friend.

- Audri Scott Williams

During his teenage years in the 1960s, Sekou participated in the Civil Rights movement through mobilizing fellow youth in Alabama and providing security for meetings of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

When Sekou was 19 years old, he became affiliated with the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as well as the Republic of New Afrika. In the 1970s, Sekou spent most of his time community organizing in Birmingham, Alabama with the Alabama Black Liberation Front, the Inmates for Action, and the Afro-Amerikan People's Party.

Because of his activism in the Civil Rights movement, he was watched closely by the FBI's counterintelligence program entitled COINTELPRO, and was subsequently profiled and pulled over on January 2, 1975 for allegedly running a yield sign and/or speeding. During the traffic stop the officer found a pistol in Sekou's vehicle, and after strong suspicion by the officer that it was the weapon listed as stolen during a Tuscaloosa, Alabama murder, Sekou was taken into custody and charged for the murders of the two white men; a fireman and KKK official Olmstead Copeland and multi-millionaire oilman John Harbin.

Throughout both trials, major witnesses admitted that they had been coerced into testifying falsely against Sekou and were repeatedly visited by certain members of the Tuscaloosa County and Jefferson County Sheriff's Department and were deliberately coached on what to say during their testimonies. Sekou was never placed at or near the crime scene, the real murder weapon was never found, nor was there ever any direct evidence to connect him to the murders.

While in prison Sekou remained politically active by becoming a jailhouse lawyer and prisoners' Civil and Human Rights activist. Many prisoners owe their freedom to Sekou's legal efforts on their behalf. He has won numerous civil actions regarding medical malpractice, abusive treatment, abusive segregation, and abusive prison conditions.

Sekou explained his motivation for becoming a jailhouse lawyer:

"Once I entered prison, what was I going to do but do the same thing I did out of prison? And that was organize—fight the powers that be for a better life and quality of life. The prisons were overcrowded and people in beds were about as close as arm-to-arm. It was filthy and the food was bad. A lot of times you'd find feces from some animal or another—mice, roaches, whatever. You'd break open a piece of cake and it had been invaded by spiders and you'd just pull it and spider webs would come with the cake. So we had a lot of work to do. As I was becoming an up-and-coming jailhouse lawyer, I began to attack and challenge those things, and with some success. And out of their success, I became notorious throughout the prison system as one 'leave-him-alone' litigator."

Following his release on June 30th, 2014, he relentlessly continued his Civil and Human Rights activism by touring nationally with The Red Flame for Freedom. The organization's main goal is to raise awareness about the proliferation of modern day slavery experienced through sex trafficking, human trafficking, mass incarceration, and children in poverty.

"Going back to prison is not on my agenda. It's not an option to be considered. But I'm not going to stop doing what I'm doing. And I'm going to take every breathing moment I can to get out and propagate truth and reveal the lies about what's going on behind prison walls," Sekou added.

Sekou was also involved in the Free Alabama Movement, an organization formed by people in men's prisons in Alabama to fight mass incarceration and prison slavery "that supports the Non-Violent and Peaceful Protests for Civil and Human Rights by the men and women (and children) who are incarcerated in Alabama, Mississippi, and anywhere else in the U.S.A."

9 May - Ex-FBI Force Removal of Leonard Peltier Paintings

The lengths to which reactionary cops, even former ones, will go to silence Leonard Peltier is boundless.

MORE:

by Frank Hopper (*Indian Country Media*)

"Freeze! Ex-FBI!" Would you obey that command? Several State of Washington officials did. In November 2015 they removed four paintings by American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier from a state-sponsored exhibition of Native American art, primarily due to the complaints of two private groups of retired FBI Agents.

Then, in March 2017, Leonard Peltier, who is currently serving two consecutive life sentences for murder after a highly controversial conviction in 1977, filed suit in federal court along with his son Chauncey against leaders of the two groups as well as several State of Washington officials, including Governor Jay Inslee, for violating Peltier's first amendment rights.

Leonard Peltier's Paintings Removed by a "Heckler's Veto"

The four paintings were originally included in a small lobby exhibition intended to celebrate Native American Heritage Month. The paintings, along with work by other Native artists, were on display in the lobby of Washington State's Department of Labor and Industries headquarters in Tumwater, Washington. None of the artwork by any of the artists was political or controversial.

The lawsuit contends on November 15, 2015, Labor and Industries Director Joel Sacks, his Public Affairs Manager Timothy Church, and Governor Jay Inslee caved-in to the protests of two retired FBI agents, Edward P. Woods, founder of the No Parole Peltier Association, and Larry Langberg, director of the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI. On that date Sacks, Church and Inslee unceremoniously had Peltier's paintings removed from the exhibition due to "knowingly false statements and slurs" from the former FBI agents intended "to induce [state officials] to remove Leonard Peltier's artwork and expression from the exhibition."

Although, according to the lawsuit, the state only received four negative comments regarding Peltier's paintings and hundreds, "if not thousands," of positive comments supporting their inclusion, Sacks, Church and Inslee removed the paintings anyway simply because Leonard Peltier himself is "too controversial" and the controversy "detracted from the message of the exhibit" which was unspecified." The lawsuit calls this a "heckler's veto," where the government bans protected speech because it fears a violent response.

Personal Thoughts: Who Are Those Guys?

Like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid being pursued by the super posse, I found myself asking "Who are those guys?" when I first became involved in this story. In November 2015, I'd seen a report on Seattle's

King 5 nightly news about the removal of Peltier's paintings from the exhibit. The story called Leonard Peltier a "cop killer" and featured an interview with retired FBI agent Ray Lauer in which he referred to Leonard as a "thug." My friends and I staged a small rally outside the King 5 studios on Thanksgiving of that year, protesting the ex-FBI agent's and King 5's blatant slurring of Leonard's character.

As part of a story I wrote, I contacted Edward Woods of the No Parole Peltier Association to get his side of it. The response I got was both polite and scathing and went on for pages. And pages. I wanted to put down my iPad and step away from it as I read his email. To me, Woods was more of a junkyard dog than a former law enforcement official. I understood why state officials were afraid of Woods and his fellow ex-FBI agent Larry Langberg.

They seemed organized and savvy enough to monitor the Internet for any news about Leonard Peltier and ready to send representatives at a moment's notice to attack any attempt to give him publicity. It appeared to me they even contacted King 5 and fed them the story about their success at getting the paintings removed. But there was one thing they hadn't counted on: the good people at the Olympia Food Co-op.

Meanwhile, Back on Planet Earth

A year and a half after the paintings were removed, I sat in the state capital of Olympia having coffee at the Eastside Olympia Food Co-op with mural artist Ira Coyne. Coyne has long been a supporter of Leonard's, having grown up listening to alternative radio programs with his father. One day while at the co-op he overheard Brian Frisina, also known as Raven Redbone, the moderator of a Native radio program called "No Bones About It" on KAOS, a community radio station in Olympia. The two began talking and Frisina told Coyne about the removal of Leonard's paintings. Coyne suggested they make a mural of one of Leonard's paintings as a way to inform the community of the country's longest-held political prisoner.

With the help of Lucas Anderson, a co-op committee member, he received permission to paint two murals based on Leonard's paintings. An anonymous donor paid for the project and soon two super-sized versions of Leonard Peltier paintings went up, one on each of the co-op's two locations.

"The murals are more enduring than just a meeting or a rally. They're always there, keeping the spirit alive," Coyne said.

As he created the murals, he invited the public to help. Anyone walking by could help fill in the outline Coyne had created, similar to a giant paint-by-numbers set, and volunteers were told who Leonard Peltier is and why his story is important. Since then, Coyne created three additional Peltier murals in Minneapolis and one more by Olympia's Artesian Well, bringing the total to six.

At the opening of the mural on the Eastside branch of the Olympia Food Co-op, a strange man appeared and began taking pictures of the mural with a telephoto lens. He stayed back at first and then became bolder, snapping pictures out in front of the mural. He never spoke to anyone and finally got in his car and drove away.

"I asked Chauncey about it," Ira recalled, speaking of Leonard's son who was there attending the opening. "Chauncey said, 'Oh, those guys are always following me around.'"

But no amount of surveillance or bullying can stop the healing brought about by Leonard Peltier's art. Ironically, the barking of the ex-FBI junkyard dogs has resulted in six separate murals in two different cities and countless lives being touched by them. The medicine of an old warrior applying color to a canvas in a maximum-security prison reverberates out into the hearts of communities across the country, creating

much more awareness of Leonard Peltier and of our nation's true history than the original exhibition ever would have.

10 May - Announcing The First Annual Int'l Day of Solidarity with Eric King

June 28th of this year will mark one year since Eric King was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and one year since he stood up in court in Kansas City, Missouri.

MORE:

EK read the statement he had prepared declaring why he took action on that fateful night and that he still has no regrets. Eric has seen and experienced a lot in the nearly three years of his incarceration, and every step of the way he is unwavering in who he is and with the principles he upholds. From long stints in the S.H.U(Secure Housing Unit), to getting moved from one institution to another, to anxiety filled situations where he doesn't know where he might be going next, he always maintains a kind of spirit that keeps him afloat no matter what they throw at him. He also understands that while he may be locked up, he is far from forgotten about, as evidenced through the collective efforts of those actively supporting him directly or on the periphery. EK is emboldened by anyone who responds to that fire inside, fights against oppression as a part of the anarchist struggle undeterred, and who remains unrelenting no matter what that state throws at you.

So, with that we'd like to announce the first annual International Day of Solidarity with Eric King on June 28th 2017! Please mark your calendars and keep EK on your mind. You can help build and maintain a base of support with us that will last for the next six years of his 10-year sentence. Let's show the state that when one of our friends and comrades is in captivity for taking action we can mobilize internationally. We can give our friends the support they deserve and show all the others out there that we will not leave you behind when you face repression or imprisonment when engaged in the anarchist struggle. Whether you decide to put on a letter writing night, a punk show, a dinner, any other type of fundraiser, or choose to raise awareness by printing off the support flyer and distribute them somewhere in your city, please join us in solidarity with Eric King on June 28th. We'd love to hear what you decide to do in your city, so please get in touch and let us know.

Eric is always asking about the other anarchist prisoners and all political prisoners. He gets the NYC ABC updates and announcements in the mail every two weeks, but if you write to or directly support any of the other PPs he'd love to hear about how they're doing. The struggle of the political prisoner is a unified struggle, so let's work hard to maintain that in the face of a relentless state trying to break it down.

Help us to sustain a level support that can help Eric push forward and push through, year after year.

For Eric King! And for Anarchism!

May 10th - Eric needs some books!

Eric is teaching yoga and poetry to folks in Florence! He wants to be able to bring some physical strength and peace through yoga, and some beauty and power through poetry to folks. He has a need for yoga and poetry reference books!

May 14th - "We are so much more" a poem by Eric King

We are so much more
than the suffering we absorb
as they beat us & keep us
from the people we adore

We are so much more
than the poison which they pour
down our throats while we choke
and spit it to the floor
We are so much more
than the labels that they force
with our make-up, fighting rapists
laugh as their teardrops form
We are so much more
than the info they store
on our friends & on our movement
while they're kicking down our door
We are so much more
than the lies that they burn
into our brains, try to train us
but we will never learn

14 May - Eco-Prisoner Marius Mason is out of Administrative Segregation!

On May 8, Marius Mason was moved out of the Carswell Federal Medical Center's (FMC) Administrative Unit, into general population.

MORE:

While this is a far cry from freedom, for the first time in nearly seven years, Marius is able to see the sky and feel the grass beneath his feet.

This welcome news comes weeks before the Fight Toxic Prisons convergence, to be held in the city of Denton, Texas, near FMC Carswell. The environmental activists and prison abolitionists organizing the conference have identified Carswell, located on a Fort Worth military base, as a prime example of a “toxic prison” worthy of national attention. Carswell has long been the subject of complaints about general conditions, as well as being of special concern due to its Administrative Unit, which has housed political prisoners and individuals suffering from serious mental illness. Anti-nuclear activist Helen Woodson was held in the facility until her release in 2011, and other political prisoners, including Aafia Siddiqui and Ana Belen Montes, remain there today.

Since Mason's confinement in the Administrative Unit, advocacy efforts from his community and his lawyer have been ongoing. Advocacy work has included not only efforts to have him moved from the overly restrictive environment of the Unit, but a successful campaign to secure gender-affirming hormone treatment, making him the first known prisoner authorized to begin female-to-male gender transition in federal custody. Also during his time in the Admin Unit, the BOP has adjusted its policies on solitary confinement. Carswell administrators gave no explanation for Marius' redesignation. Needless to say, friends and supporters believe the move is long overdue.

Shortly after his sentencing in 2010, Marius was moved from FCI Waseca to the highly restrictive administrative unit at FMC Carswell. After litigation, a FOIA request yielded a document indicating that his redesignation was due to his “radicalizing and recruiting other inmates.” No specific information was provided about why an inmate might be placed into the unit, or how Marius might be able to transition out of it. Indeed, more information is available about the BOP's Communication Management Units (CMUs), created with the stated purpose of monitoring alleged so-called terrorists, than about the administrative unit at Carswell.

For several years, Marius' lawyer, Moira Meltzer-Cohen, attempted without success to get the BOP to provide a written statement justifying the decision to keep him in the Administrative Unit. According to Meltzer-Cohen, the few written documents about the facility's Administrative Unit state that it exists in order to coerce compliance with institutional safety. Upon successful behavioral modification, the inmate presumably is to transition back to general population. Marius remained in the administrative unit for years with an almost flawless disciplinary record. The facility's redesignation of Marius into general population therefore seems to be a belated, but welcome compliance with the BOP's own stated goals.

We are hopeful that this move may mean better control over his diet and more reliable mail service.

Metzer-Cohen stated, "We wish Marius a lot of luck in this transition. While we may never know the reason for it, this does draw attention to the fact that the BOP finally seems to be acting in accordance with its own policy on administrative segregation in Mason's case, after years of avoiding it."

The Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons (FTP) sends love to Marius in this move and extends solidarity to all people in administrative segregation as a penalty for their beliefs or mental health conditions which the BOP doesn't want to deal with. We support the call to immediately close Carswell's Administrative Unit entirely.

We also call on the BOP to address the long history of abuses in general population which Marius is entering. The Carswell Federal Medical Center has been the subject of more than a decade of scrutiny by groups such as the ACLU, which released an extensive report calling it a Hospital of Horrors.

Background on Marius and the Carswell prison

Marius Mason, a transgender prisoner at the federal women's prison in near Fort Worth, Texas on the Carswell military base. Mason is serving a 22-year sentence for his underground actions against logging and genetic engineering, in which no one was injured. He was convicted in 2008 based on testimony of an informant.

FMC Carswell is home to at least two Superfund sites within a mile of the prison. One is a 760-acre plant known as Air Force Plant 4 General Dynamics that has manufactured military planes since 1942, resulting in soil and water contaminated with hazardous chemicals. The U.S. Air Force currently owns the facility; Lockheed Martin Corporation operates it. This site is on the National Priorities List, meaning it is among the worst hazardous waste sites identified by the EPA. The other is located at Building 1215. The EPA considers this to be an active site, with contamination continuing to impact the area. Carswell has also held to other prominent political prisoners, including Catholic Worker Kathleen Rumpf and activist-lawyer Lynne Stewart, who was released in 2014 and passed in March of this year.

15 May - An Update and Statement from Krow

Below is the latest from water protector Krow.

MORE:

I often wonder why it is, yet again, I and/or my comrades have been targeted by the cops? The answer, yet again, is that it is their job; whether they are spiritual or not, compassionate or not, they simply have a job to do: subjugate, imprison, or kill those they deem or are 'told' endanger the status quo. Thus these jobs must be eliminated.

Prison abolition & prisoner support is a living commitment dedicated to the active destruction of the entire capitalist system that incarcerates us all. This commitment to the eradication of an unjust & tyrannical regime does not exclude [prison] reform. Whilst people are behind bars, we can work to minimize their suffering—sometimes this is simply ensuring they get the legal & health services they need & deserve, & sometimes it's sending a letter or puttin' a few bucks on someone's commissary. Once these facilities cease to exist, we must have some consensual & effective methods in place for communally 'dealing' with 'chomos' etc. No prisoners means no prisoners, so until ALL are free, we have work to do! Next time, it could be YOU! So start a general bail fund in your community today!

We must also illustrate to folks that there's no place for our radical selves in modern-day 'society'. We must stick together & support each other & we create our own way. EVERY day we can plant seeds & take steps to further creating our own realities; we must train for resistance in both the present moment & future, including physically, mentally, emotionally, & spiritually stimulating 'exercises' & preparation.

Being engaged in one's community is not a 'choice', (I'm trying to avoid the word 'activism' here; it's a liberal & self-righteous concept & persynality attributed to issues & actions that should just be common sense to support and/or resist.) Thus, one's community engagement may be a decent gauge of one's privilege or lack thereof.

In terms of ongoing effectiveness of the rad communities, keep it simple: conceal one's identity when necessary to avoid political or police repression, & maintain an air of plausible deniability. Good security culture should aid this goal.

While sometimes incarceration seems to be a necessary sacrifice to gain allies in some senses, hopefully it can be avoided as much as possible. More creative methods of underground movement seem necessary!

Pertaining to rad inspiration, people have & STILL ARE resisting the capitalist regimes, oppression, & various injustices all over the world constantly! Rojava, the Coconut Revolution in Papua New Guinea, Unis'tot'en, aspects of the #NODAPL struggle, aspects of the Cuban Revolution, the Defiance of Jews in Russia in the 1940s, the railroad blockade on the Bad River Reservation in the late 1990s, AIM's work in the 1960s & '70s, the Black Panthers' work in the 1960s and 1970s, The Spanish Revolution in Greece to Tunisia, to all the so-called America's give ya enough examples to name just a few! I've been reading George Orwell's 'Homage to Catalonia', it definitely inspires the possibility of the 'A-Team's' revolt in various places.

Once again, until all the prisons and jails are reduced to the bare minerals that comprise them, let us not forget to support prisoners post-release. This is quite the transition and speaking from experience, they'll need your assistance spiritually, emotionally, financially and otherwise.

Another thing I've recently experienced that needs to change so that it can reduce the suffering of other inmates in the future, is the Prisoner Transport Systems. Myself and countless others have been delivered to different facilities by PTS, which is nothing short of a janky humyn-trafficking service. There are both buses and vans; womyn are put in 4x4 cages on the lamers-style buses and the little sprinter vans, like the one I was transported in, it can be equated to a creepy dog-catcher van! There are no windows, it's pitch black most of the time, and you are squeezed into a tiny compartment to sit, approximately five by two feet, often with three other gals for days at a time. You are shackled both hands and ankles 24/7 and there is no room to stretch out. You are fed cheap fast food, which excites some, but is usually the same thing continuously or not enough food...I had to beg for maxi-pads to put on my bare and sore-ridden raw ankles (from the shackles rubbing)...It is also either scalding hot or extremely cold in your compartment and you are not allowed a blanket and are subsequently often scolded for complaining about it.

In conjunction with all of this, you are often dropped at one of the “housing” facilities, either in Alabama, Kentucky or Charleston Missouri where I was held. This facility had 36 womyn in a 16 persyn cell-block at its peak, thick and dangerous black mold on the ceiling and air vents making everyone sick, scant materials and services (you were only given one roll of toilet paper weekly) and the COs often referred to us as “cunts” and “bitches”. Our cells were freezing cold, we were often hungry and legally PTS has 180 days to transport you to your final destination, all the while you are not allowed commissary or phone calls whilst in transport. In the midst of your unknown lengthy stay in housing, you also find out that the Charleston jail likes to keep you for possibly as long as they can because they receive \$150 a day for your presence from the state of your final destination...thus why we call PTS humyn trafficking; this “service” must be changed.

Lastly, seemingly because of my beliefs that the land belongs to those who are indigenous to it, people often write me thinking I’m indigenous to so called North America...Though we are all indigenous to somewhere, my blood make-up is somewhat a mystery; from what I know, mainly and mostly I derive from ancient Germany and southeast so called Europe. If we go back 20 generations, however, that’s approximately over five million ancestors you’re related to!

For those of us who are a mix of many ethnicities, which surmounts to many, there may not be one “right” answer to where we many “come-from” or which land base we should be most loyal to... All we can do is be good visitors in a space, ask for consent as much as possible and remember that we must ALL defend the air, water and land for future generations of ALL CREATURES to come.

FIGHT FOR AND DEFEND THE LAND BASE WHERE YOU ARE!

So I still do not know what will happen with my case, I am grateful for the many womyn I have met while incarcerated; hearing their stories always makes me a better, more compassionate person and serves as a reminder that helping others help themselves with varying addictions is valuable. How can we expect people to fight the system while they struggle with addiction? People need community and/or treatment not jail or imprisonment we are perfectly capable as individuals in communities of procuring our own food, keeping ourselves safe, raising our own children, and creating our own rules or lack thereof. Creating plenty of autonomous zones, like France’s ZAD, various tribal structures (not IRA non-traditional tribal governments) are both living and past examples of this. More time needs to be spent building communities instead of prisons; it is imperative to start general and legal bail funds in your community. We must be prepared to aid our comrades at every turn instead of scrambling at the last minute.

In closing, “We know we’re in a body that’s going to die, but we behave as if it’s not going to happen to us. This viewpoint is from the inactive side of infinity where we don’t see our connection to intention and our ability to stay in harmony with our creative spirit.” – Dr Wayne W. Dyer

15 May - Seth Hayes Finally Has Insulin Pump Installed

Greetings from Seth. He sends his warm thanks for the much needed support and hard work put in to the long struggle to have the insulin pump, which was installed May 15th.

MORE:

So far it is working well and more updates to come as it all gets worked out, and the monitor is phased in. It was much needed and will be put to serious use. Thank you all for your vigilance!

To contribute to ongoing efforts supporting Robert Seth Hayes, please donate online at <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/810a58>

16 May - 5 Year Anniversary of NATO 3 arrests today

On May 16, 2012, the NATO 3– Brent Betterly, Brian Jacob Church, and Jared Chase were arrested.

MORE:

The NATO 3 were arrested on May 16, 2012 in the lead up to the anti-NATO protests in Chicago, Illinois. They were originally charged with 11 felony counts under the Illinois state version of the USA Patriot Act including material aid for terrorism, conspiracy to commit terrorism & possession of an incendiary device. What surfaced after their arrest were that two undercover cops, "Mo" and "Gloves" had been trying to entrap these three activists and others as part of Chicago's surveillance & targeting of the local activist community.

The NATO 3 went to trial on January 21, 2014, were acquitted of all terrorism counts on February 7. They were found guilty of possession of an incendiary device with the intent to commit arson, possession of an incendiary device with the knowledge that another intended to commit arson and mob action.

On April 25, 2014, Brian Church was sentenced to five years, Brent Betterly to six years, and Jared Chase to eight years. In November 2014, Brian Church was released on parole. In April 2015, Brent Betterly was released on parole. In April 2016, Jared was sentenced to an additional year in prison for squirting a shampoo bottle of his human waste at a correctional officer.

Jay Chase remains in prison at Pontiac Correctional and his release date has been extended two times now. Currently, he is set to be released in June 2019 but that could change as Jay receives incident reports and has lost good time. He was diagnosed with Huntingdon's Disease before trial, a horrible illness that results in personality changes, irritability, impulsiveness and impaired judgment. Jay is not receiving treatment for this disease from the Illinois Department of Corrections.

On this anniversary, please reach out to Jay or send him some books.
<https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1ZYU2MW7KDDON>

17 May - Chelsea Manning Freed From Prison!

Chelsea Manning exited the walls of Fort Leavenworth military prison in Kansas on the morning of May 17th.

MORE:

by Glenn Greenwald (*The Intercept*)

Ever since Chelsea Manning was revealed as the whistleblower responsible for one of the most important journalistic archives in history, her heroism has been manifest. She was the classic leaker of conscience, someone who went at the age of 20 to fight in the Iraq War believing it was noble, only to discover the dark reality not only of that war but of the U.S. government's actions in the world generally: war crimes, indiscriminate slaughter, complicity with high-level official corruption, and systematic deceit of the public.

In the face of those discoveries, she knowingly risked her own liberty to disclose documents to the world that would reveal the truth, with no expectation of benefit to herself. As someone who has spent years touting the nobility of her actions, my defenses of her always early on centered on the vital nature of the material she revealed and the right of the public to know about it.

It is genuinely hard to overstate the significance of those revelations: Aside from exposing some of the most visceral footage of indiscriminate slaughter by the U.S. military seen in decades, the leaks were credited — even by harsh WikiLeaks skeptics such as New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller — with helping to spark the Arab Spring. Even more significantly, revelations about how the U.S. military executed Iraqi civilians, then called in a bombing raid to cover up what they did, prevented the Iraqi government from granting the Obama administration the troop immunity it was seeking in order to extend the war in Iraq.

Though Manning's case has been somewhat colored by the changing perceptions over time of WikiLeaks, she actually first attempted to contact traditional media outlets such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and Politico with her revelations, only to be thwarted by a failure to get their attention. In the online chats that she had with a deceitful individual who thereafter became a government informant and turned her in, she said her motive in leaking was solely to trigger "worldwide discussion, debates, and reforms," adding: "I want people to see the truth ... regardless of who they are ... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public."

In the wake of these disclosures, the U.S. government — as it reflexively does — claimed that the release of the documents would endanger lives, and that those responsible for publishing the leaks had "blood on their hands." But subsequent investigations by the AP and McClatchy found those accusations utterly unfounded, and ultimately, even Defense Secretary Robert Gates ridiculed the hysteria driving the government's claims about the leak's harms as "significantly overwrought."

In sum, though Manning was largely scorned and rejected in most mainstream Washington circles, she did everything one wants a whistleblower to do: tried to ensure that the public learns of concealed corruption and criminality, with the intent of fostering debate and empowering the citizenry with knowledge that should never have been concealed from them. And she did it all knowing that she was risking prison to do so, but followed the dictates of her conscience rather than her self-interest.

But as courageous as that original whistleblowing was, Manning's heroism has only multiplied since then, become more multifaceted and consequential. As a result, she has inspired countless people around the world. At this point, one could almost say that her 2010 leaking to WikiLeaks has faded into the background when assessing her true impact as a human being. Her bravery and sense of conviction wasn't a one-time outburst: It was the sustained basis for her last seven years of imprisonment that she somehow filled with purpose, dignity, and inspiration.

The overarching fact of Manning's imprisonment was its enduring harshness. In 2010, during the first months of her detention in a U.S. Marine brig in Quantico, Virginia, I began hearing reports from her handful of approved visitors about the vindictive and abusive conditions of her confinement: prolonged solitary confinement, being kept in her cell alone for virtually the entire day, gratuitous, ubiquitous surveillance, and worse. When I called the brig to investigate these claims, I was startled when a brig official confirmed to me, in the most blasé tones, their accuracy.

That enabled me to report for the first time that Manning was being imprisoned "under conditions that constitute cruel and inhumane treatment and, by the standards of many nations, even torture." That report sparked a major controversy, ultimately culminating in the resignation of President Obama's State Department spokesman, P.J. Crowley, after he denounced the treatment of Manning as "ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid on the part of the Department of Defense."

But that turned out to be only the beginning of the abuse she endured. Several months after my report, the New York Times reported that Manning was being subjected to deliberately humiliating rituals in which

she "was stripped and left naked" in her cell "for seven hours," and "required to stand naked" outside her cell during inspection. It was back then, in 2011, that the first report of Manning's suicidal thoughts surfaced. Amnesty International denounced her detention conditions as a "breach of the USA's obligations under international standards and treaties," and ultimately called for protests to demand a cessation of the abuse.

It was nonetheless difficult to generate large amounts of public or journalistic support for Manning: Many on the right long viewed leakers as traitors and thus took glee in her suffering, while many liberals loyal to Obama literally mocked the abuse Manning endured. But ultimately, the U.N. special rapporteur on torture investigated the conditions of Manning's imprisonment and concluded in 2012 "that the U.S. military was at least culpable of cruel and inhumane treatment," and "that imposing seriously punitive conditions of detention on someone who has not been found guilty of any crime is a violation of his right to physical and psychological integrity as well as of his presumption of innocence."

All of the controversy generated by those reports ultimately compelled the Obama administration to transfer her from Quantico to a more professionalized but still harrowing prison, in the middle of Kansas, on a military base at Fort Leavenworth, as she awaited her trial. While her imprisonment then became more normalized, her heroism multiplied to entirely new levels.

In July 2013, Manning was convicted of multiple counts of "espionage" for her whistleblowing (though she was acquitted of the most serious charge she faced: the treason-equivalent of "aiding the enemy"). On August 21, she was sentenced to 35 years in prison. On August 22 — the very next day — she issued her statement identifying herself as Chelsea Manning, a trans woman, and demanded that she receive from military authorities the medical therapy she needed to complete her transition:

Given the way that I feel, and have felt since childhood, I want to begin hormone therapy as soon as possible. I hope that you will support me in this transition. I also request that, starting today, you refer to me by my new name and use the feminine pronoun (except in official mail to the confinement facility).

It is hard to describe the courage and determination that required. Less than 24 hours after she learned that she had been consigned to spend the next 35 years in the custody of a military prison, she publicly identified as the trans woman she is and demanded the medical therapy to which she was legally and ethically entitled.

To truly grasp the bravery that required, it's necessary to understand her situation at the time. In 2015, I visited her at Fort Leavenworth. To get there, one must fly to Kansas City, then drive more than an hour into the woods of Kansas, in the proverbial middle of nowhere. One arrives at a sprawling, completely militarized base, Fort Leavenworth, where it was quite difficult to gain access. Upon entering, one drives another 15 to 20 minutes deep into the military base to arrive at the military brig, which itself is a labyrinth of cages and security measures that must be navigated in order to finally meet her somewhere in the bowels of that prison.

In sum, it's almost impossible to be more isolated, more cut off from society, than Chelsea Manning was. Coming out as a trans person, and embarking on the transition process, is extraordinarily difficult even under the best of conditions. Trans people still face incomparable societal hurdles — including an epidemic of violence — even when they enjoy networks of support in the middle of progressive cities. But to do that while in a military brig, in the middle of Kansas, where your daily life depends exclusively upon your military jailers, is both incomprehensibly difficult and incomprehensibly courageous.

Manning's struggles in prison, including her suicide attempts and grotesquely cruel punishments for them, were publicly reported. Although the military prison begrudgingly gave her some of the therapy she sought, authorities also imposed petty restrictions, including a refusal even to let her grow her hair and a failure to provide much of the support that was needed.

As one of the few people on the list of approved visitors, I spent many hours on the phone with her during this period. Her experience both in prison generally and transitioning specifically was filled with completely gratuitous challenges and difficulties caused by malicious or ignorant prison authorities.

But what is ultimately most striking about Chelsea Manning is her unyielding persistence. In the most humble yet determined tones, she insists on following what she knows is the right path regardless of the risks and costs to her. And in doing so, far beyond the initial acts of whistleblowing, she became a hero to LGBTs around the world, and so many other people, by demanding the right to be who she is, and to live freely, even under the most oppressive conditions.

This is not a case where I feign journalistic objectivity or neutrality. I regard Chelsea Manning as one of this generation's greatest heroes, as well as a valued friend. While her release today is somewhat bittersweet — How can one forget the grave injustice that she spent almost all of her 20s in prison for having done something that merited our collective gratitude, and the abuse she continually endured? — I am thrilled that she will finally live as a free woman, and incredibly excited about what she can achieve, how she can inspire people, now that she is finally released.

Ultimately, what makes Chelsea Manning unique is not so much her political heroism but rather the way she has personally navigated her life after that. As I recounted in the letter I wrote in support of her clemency petition, she is the single most empathetic and compassionate person I have ever met. When I would speak to her, it was difficult for me to contain my anger and resentment over the abuse she had suffered and continued to suffer. Yet she never displayed or even seemed to share any of that anger, instead often defending even those who wronged her by empathizing with their own predicaments and mitigating their behavior.

To be sure, her transition back into freedom is not going to be easy. She's been imprisoned since she was 22 years old. She knows that she is a controversial and polarizing figure and is unsure what life outside of Fort Leavenworth has in store for her. It will naturally be a huge adjustment in all sorts of ways.

But Manning is one of the most intelligent, engaging, and inspiring people one could ever hope to meet. There is a massive amount of admiration and support for her all over the world, as evidenced by the incredibly successful fundraising campaign to ease her transition out of prison. No matter where I have spoken in the world, the mere mention of her name prompts sustained standing ovations for her. All of that — her seeing how much love and gratitude there is for her — will undoubtedly strengthen her in whatever she chooses to do.

It is rare, especially lately, to find inspiration in any political stories. But the last decade of Chelsea Manning's life, and the potential it now holds for the future, is one of those cases. One shouldn't idealize what happened to her: There is a lot of injustice, harm, and outrage in her story. But the way she has inspired so many, and the fact that today she is truly free, is a cause for real celebration, and a valuable reminder of how human beings, through pure acts of conscience and determination, can singlehandedly change the world for the better.

17 May - Oscar López Rivera Freed From Home Confinement!

Oscar is finally free and will be making a trip to NYC in the coming weeks. The former political prisoner thanked progressive movements for supporting his decades-long struggle for a free Puerto Rico.

MORE:

May 17th - Puerto Rico welcomed home Political Prisoner Oscar Lopez

Today, Puerto Rico welcomed home Political Prisoner Oscar Lopez. He was asked: why are you wearing black on the day you were freed?

His reply:

1. During my time in prison, I was never able to mourn my loved ones.
 2. Today is the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. I want to express my solidarity with that community
 3. I want to express my solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement
 4. Because my message is, and will always be, a message of love, not a message of hate or fear.
 5. To express my solidarity with the political prisoners in the United States, including the Puerto Rican Political Prisoner, Ana Belén Montes
 6. To express my solidarity with the students of the University of Puerto Rico.
- He ended with: "Here's to the struggle for a just and better world"

May 17th - Oscar Lopez Rivera Vows to Continue Fight for Puerto Rico Independence

(teleSUR)

In his first hours of freedom after 36 years behind bars in U.S. prison, Puerto Rican independence leader Oscar Lopez Rivera vowed Wednesday to continue to fight for the freedom and independence of Puerto Rico while expressing solidarity with progressive movements across the Americas.

“During the years I was jailed I always thought I would return home,” Lopez said during a press conference in San Juan with the ocean at his back, thanking all the progressive organizations and world leaders who supported him and worked for his release over the years.

“You have a Puerto Rican that has never promoted sectarianism. I come here to fight and work, that’s what I know how to do,” Lopez Rivera said. “We can make Puerto Rico the nation that it has the potential to be.”

The life-long freedom fighter for Puerto Rico's decolonization and independence thanked Pope Francis, Argentina's Grandmothers and Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, former Uruguayan President Jose "Pepe" Mujica, the governments of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba, as well as artists, activists and especially youth and children.

“It is is them who have in their hands the future of our country," said Lopez Rivera, dressed in black to represent his mourning for the friends and relatives who died while he was in jail for the past 36 years and to whom he never had a chance to say goodbye.

He also spoke out about the harsh austerity currently policies rocking the island in the face of a crippling debt crisis, stressing the importance of funding public education and applauding Puerto Rican students for being on the front lines of the struggle to defend education and resist colonial relations with Washington.

“Unity will make decolonization possible, there is no other option,” Lopez Rivera said. "Loving our country doesn’t cost anything — what will cost us is to lose it."

He also thanked Venezuela and all "those who defend the Bolivarian Revolution" and called for the U.S. to end its interference in the nation.

"I ask the U.S. to stop interfering in Venezuela, to stop using people and structures to reach countries and create a hostile environment with violence, and to have people lose because in the end it's the people who lose."

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was the first world leader to talk to Lopez Rivera and told him in a phone call Wednesday he wanted to thank the activist for his strength and kindness in his struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico.

"A big hug — it was very touching to see you with you family," Maduro said to Lopez Rivera. "Long live a free Puerto Rico, long live dignity."

Lopez Rivera, in return, thanked Maduro for his support throughout the long process of waiting for his freedom.

"I feel Puerto Rican, but I also feel Venezuelan," Lopez Rivera said to the president. "The truth of Venezuela will prevail, we are sure it will prevail, we hope the U.S. can't do what it has in mind and what it aspires to do."

Lopez Rivera also criticized the financial oversight board put in place last year by U.S. Congress through the controversial law known as PROMESA to restructure the island's debt. He said that nothing that comes out of the oversight board — which has been widely criticized for undermining Puerto Rico's democracy and deepening colonialism — will be good for the island nation since it promotes sweeping privatization and gives benefits to international companies instead of small farmers in the country.

"They made us their guinea pig to do experiments and make us poorer," he said.

Lopez Rivera's daughter Clarisa Lopez Ramos thanked the worldwide support for her father and for the fight to protect the island's main public post-secondary education institution, the 70,000-student University of Puerto Rico, as it faces massive cuts as part of a harsh austerity plan to tackle the island's massive debt load.

"The daughters and sons of Oscar are the students at the University of Puerto Rico, resisting and fighting," said Lopez Ramos, referring to the student movements that have launched strikes and other actions to protest the cuts. "Thank you, my dad returned home."

A celebratory concert attended by thousands of Puerto Ricans is underway in Rio Piedras featuring artists, musicians and prominent individuals welcoming Lopez Rivera home.

Lopez Rivera returned to the island in February to serve out the final weeks before his freedom Wednesday on house arrest after former President Barack Obama commuted his sentence in January.

The activist thanked former U. S. presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, who commuted the sentences of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

Recalling when he declined Clinton's 1999 offer for a pardon, the activist said he rejected it since other comrades were still jailed under poor conditions. "I believe in principles, and I believe in not leaving anyone behind."

Finally, he said he will tour the 78 municipalities of the island now that he is free, as he has promised in the past.

"Long live Puerto Rico, of love and liberty!" Lopez Rivera said. "Always in resistance and struggle!"

18 May - PITTSBURGH: Comrades Maxx and Shea are Free!

We are happy to report Maxx and Shea were released early from the Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh.

MORE:

Far from being an example of goodwill and magnanimity from Judge Mariani, their initial 3-12 month sentence from him (when the D.A. only asked for a weekend) was the real show of his great benevolence. We are excited to have our friends out to enjoy the beginning of the summer.

While two of our accomplices now transition into probation, we have handfuls of Pittsburgh comrades still going back and forth to court appearances with stacks of felonies held above their heads, in what is the new normal for anarchists and anti-authoritarians in this country. While we predict these large and exaggerated cases will get increasingly common for us in Pittsburgh and around the U.S., we want to be ready to support our friends and ourselves in what should be looked at as the inevitability of, in the least, wasted cash in courts; in the most, long prison sentences. Tabling information, talking to lawyers, conference calls, getting legit, putting on shows and letter writings, crowd funding, meetings and late night talks, hanging outside of that stupid jail, and Signal upon Signal loops—we got this, in a sense. But what can we do beyond responding to the crisis of individual repressions? How can we create a culture of defiance and rejection to police, jails, prisons and snitching on a local level beyond reaction and into action? As we move forward with supporting our friends locally, and reach out to folks across the country, we aspire to move towards actively promoting an anarchist total rejection of the court and policing systems, and to respond to their tactics of fear head first, horns down.

20 May - Burn Down the American Plantation: Announcing the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement

Comrades recently announced the formation of the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement and put out a call to all those seeking freedom, who are committed to abolishing slavery, and who desire liberation for all.

MORE:

From It's Going Down

The United States was built on slavery, and despite the American Civil War, this oppression never ended. The abolitionist movement fought against this tyranny, but modern slavery and mass brutality persist unchecked.

Around the world, fascism is on the rise. The state has openly declared war on our communities, threatening to ethnically cleanse Latinos, criminalize Muslims, destroy indigenous land, and oppress the LGBTQ community, while continuing to murder and incarcerate black people.

The Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement unequivocally states that the plantation system must be destroyed.

Today, the anarchist struggle, and anti-state feminism is on the rise, and authoritarian modes of resistance are now discredited.

The Revolution in Rojava in Northern Syria has set an exceptional standard. With a foundation in feminism, ecology, anti-state organizing, and armed struggle, it has actualized a revolution beyond 20th century nationalism. With the founding of groups like the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces, it is clear that this is the time for anarchist revolutionaries to act without hesitation.

We declare our solidarity with the international anti-fascist and anarchist struggle, and propose concrete steps in the struggle for abolitionism.

Revolutionary Abolitionists must fight hand in hand with those facing oppression. We intend to establish a new Underground Railroad to free people from bondage. By building revolutionary self-defense networks, connecting them to one another, and developing militant strategies in our neighborhoods, our network will create the capacity to destroy state power and defend our communities.

A new global paradigm for revolution has been established, to be taken up by dedicated revolutionaries, autonomous territories, guerrillas in armed struggle, and all those engaged in the global drive towards liberation and away from statehood, capitalism, patriarchy, and domination.

We call on anti-state groups to join the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement and send this message to our comrades to help build the capacity to burn down the American plantation once and for all.

Revolutionary Goals

SHORT TERM GOAL: THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

We will create networks for those facing detention, incarceration, deportation, or white supremacist violence to escape and live with dignity. We invite revolutionaries to help build a contemporary underground railroad, outside the reach of the state. Revolutionaries, social centers, and antifa groups that are already active can help build greater infrastructure of resistance to support those fleeing the state. From this foundation, we set the political framework for the next stages.

LONG TERM GOAL: BUILDING THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT

For the Abolitionist project to be successful we must eventually transition from resistance to a revolutionary situation. Relationships and groups built through the underground railroad have the potential to become the foundation for organized defense groups, local councils, and regional/national councils.

We invite comrades to coordinate our activities regionally, and nationally as part of an Abolitionist Council.

POLITICAL FOUNDATION:

1. Self-Defense

Defense of oppressed people and of our political projects is paramount. We propose developing and tying defense teams to localities and collectives that are based on abolitionist practices.

2. The Neighborhood Council

As the Underground Railroad network grows outside the jurisdiction of the state and reactionary forces, it is built through non-hierarchical relationships of trust. Collectives and councils developed according to needs, issues, and political motivation involve people in neighborhood self-governance.

3. Conflict Resolution and Revolutionary Justice

Forms of conflict resolution are essential for developing revolutionary relationships. Social cohesion, rather than punishment, must be the foundation. Abolitionist political growth seeks to destroy the prison, yet those oppressing others must be combated.

4. **Abolition of Gender**

The same forces that put people in bondage also utilize gender roles as a source of domination. Overcoming imprisonment and liberating humanity from captivity must happen simultaneously with the abolition of gender constraints.

5. **Expropriation and the Cooperative Economy**

To carve out an autonomous territory, or to begin the revolutionary process, goods, land, and tools must be expropriated, or taken away from those who withhold them. We are striving towards a situation where necessities cannot be taken away from those who need them, but instead are shared with those who lack them.

Read the full call at revolutionaryabolition.org/political-framework/introduction.html

June 2nd - Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement Book Launch

WHAT: Book Release

WHEN: 7:00-9:00pm, Friday, June 2

WHERE: The Base - 1302 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11221

COST: FREE

The Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement presents: *Burn Down the American Plantation*, a book that lays out the political tenets behind this proposal.

Celebrate the book launch with us at this potluck /BBQ. We'll share a few reflections about the subjects in the text, and save most of the time to eat and talk informally about future organizing in NYC and abroad. Come through for a copy of the book, to learn about ways to get involved, and build relationships with comrades.

The Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement is a political movement dedicated to freeing people from bondage and building resistance in the United States. We situate our political movement in the context of the abolitionist struggle against slavery and continue in the tradition, from Nat Turner to the Black Liberation Movement. We believe the Civil War was never resolved and the system of slavery transitioned into the prison industrial complex. Our struggle today must begin from this starting point. Lastly, as revolutionary anarchists, the abolitionist struggle must be extended to the state and capitalism, the perpetrators of oppression. The revolutionary movement in the US today is at a cross roads, as fascist movements are expanding, and the state becomes increasingly authoritarian. The Rojava Revolution, in northern Syria, provides us with a model for revolution today with its foundation in communal and council based political organization and militant defense.