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Updates for July 18th

22 Jun - DC cops used ‘molestation and rape as punishment’ against activists arrested at Trump inauguration: suit

Journalists and activists have sued Washington, D.C., and 170 police officers over alleged sexual abuse after they were arrested during protests against the inauguration of President Donald Trump.

MORE:

by Travis Gettys (*Raw Story*)

The plaintiffs — photojournalist Shay Horse, legal observer Judah Ariel and demonstrators Elizabeth Legesse and Milo Gonzalez — claim officers violated their civil rights after rounding them up with hundreds of other activists and reporters, reported Think Progress.

The suit filed by the ACLU of D.C. seeks compensatory and punitive damages against the district, police chief Peter Newsham and two unnamed officers over their Jan. 20 arrests and their treatment in a confined “kettle” area set up on a city street corner.

According to the complaint, an officer ordered five of the detainees to take off their pants before grabbing their testicles and then inserting a finger into their anuses as other officers laughed.

“I felt like they were using molestation and rape as punishment,” said Horse, one of six journalists arrested during the demonstrations. “They used those tactics to inflict pain and misery on people who are supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. It felt like they were trying to break me and the others—break us so that even if the charges didn’t stick, that night would be our punishment.”

Police said in a statement that the officers’ conduct would be investigated, but the department defended the Inauguration Day arrests as lawful.

An attorney for the ACLU said he wasn’t confident an internal investigation would deal appropriately with the officers’ actions, which he said appeared to be highly coordinated.

The U.S. attorney for Washington, D.C., declined comment to Think Progress on how the lawsuit might affect the 202 felony prosecutions the office is pursuing against demonstrators arrested during Trump’s inauguration.

July 3rd - Why am I facing 75 years in prison?

By Carlo Piantini (*Al Jazeera*)

By threatening anti-Trump protesters with decades in prison, the state is attempting to criminalize civil disobedience.

On January 20th, during the inauguration of Donald Trump, the DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) violently and indiscriminately attacked scores of protesters, journalists, legal observers, medics, and bystanders in the vicinity of an anti-fascist/anti-capitalist march. The MPD trapped, or “kettled”, more than 200 people, arresting them on a single felony riot charge with a boilerplate affidavit.

The march was an act of resistance against both Trump and the system that gives him power. As a part of this march, I was also kettled and arrested alongside scores of others. Nearly six months later, I and more than 200 other people have been re-indicted on eight felonies each. We all currently face the potential of 75 years in federal prison.

Certain memories of the day of my arrest stand most vividly in my mind: zip-ties cutting into my wrist and the taste of pepper spray; losing count of the roaches that crawled over me in my sleep; the constant horror of not knowing where my partner was.

According to a report issued in February by the DC Office of Police Complaints, the MPD unleashed a variety of "less-than-lethal" weapons against protesters - without warning or direct provocation - as a general crowd control tactic. "Less-than-lethal" is a very broad euphemism. Thinking about the violence of the police that day, I remember the footage of an elderly woman brutalized by a river of pepper spray and saved from a phalanx of riot police by a black-clad protester. I recall a fellow arrestee in my cell unit with an eye bulging out of its socket like a tomato - the offspring of pepper spray and contact lenses - and how we had to demand they receive medical attention.

Watching the footage from the arrest made me relive the concussion grenades that exploded in the streets. I am reminded of the mutilation of Sophia Wilansky's arm at Standing Rock by a similar "stinger", while the police dowsed hundreds of water protectors with water cannon in below freezing temperatures. I remember the blood-soaked pavement outside the Omni Hotel when the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department murdered Justin Carr with a rubber bullet to the head during the Charlotte uprising last September.

These tactics are not new in Washington, DC. In 2002, then Assistant Police Chief Peter Newsham ordered the mass arrest of over 400 people in Pershing Park during protests against the World Bank. The mass arrest ultimately cost the city more than \$8m in a civil suit that ruled it an unlawful act of police misconduct.

As acting police chief, Newsham also issued the order for the inauguration day mass arrest. Despite the specter of yet another brutal mass arrest, Newsham was appointed police chief by DC Mayor Muriel E Bowser and the DC Council in May.

With a pending lawsuit challenging Newsham's abusive practices, it remains to be seen what he will cost the working people of DC this time. A civil suit has already been initiated by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the current investigation into police conduct will cost approximately \$150,000, which is \$50,000 more than the estimated damage of the alleged events on Inauguration Day.

To understand the extremity of the charges brought against us in this case, the arrests need to be viewed through the lens of political repression. Across the country, thousands of people are engaged in resistance against the daily operations of the capital and the state, fighting to survive the crises that this system constantly produces. Almost immediately after our arrests, thousands of people occupied and shut down airports to reject what has become known as the Muslim Ban. Camps have formed in Florida and Pennsylvania to blockade the development of the Sabal Trail Pipeline and Mariner 2 Pipeline. An encampment has formed outside of the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA, to support undocumented immigrants that have been resisting forced prison labour through hunger strikes. In major towns across the country, from Portland to Olympia to Houston, marginalized communities have disrupted fascist/white-nationalist rallies in self-defense amid an astronomical spike in hate crimes and right-wing violence.

None of this resistance can be tolerated. The state's main social function is specifically to suppress public outrage, either by redirecting it into preconfigured campaigns or through political repression.

The prosecutor would like to depoliticize the charges we are facing, but the reality is that this case is not about so-called "criminal behavior": This case is about turning protesters into felons, and the criminalization of resistance. The state is perfectly willing to permit thousands of people to wear safety pins and pussyhats, march along well-policed parade routes, and powerlessly petition their authorities for change - so long as they do not shatter the illusion of everyday politics or disrupt the constant flow of capital.

But what Standing Rock and Black Lives Matter have taught us all is that if a community's resistance is perceived as effective then the full measure of state violence will be used to neutralize it. Standing Rock prevented the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline for months before its eviction by legions of police. The executions of Mike Brown and Freddie Gray produced demonstrations of such tremendous pain and outcry that they seized Ferguson and Baltimore, and were stomped out by the National Guard.

The events of January 20 represented a similar disruption: The march shut down the roads of DC, and the magnitude of the MPD's violent response shattered the fragile spectacle of the inauguration. Business-as-usual was put on hold, and the consequence is that everyone rounded-up and arrested must now be made an example of. The superseding indictment and its additional felony charges are a means to coerce defendants into accepting plea deals against their will.

The goal is not to convict people to 75 years in prison. The severity of the threat is intended to extract as many guilty pleas as possible, while sending a clear message to potential protesters that the consequences of opposition will be grave. These pleas are needed to vindicate the state's narrative and legitimize their repression. The intention is to set a legal precedent for mass arrests in the era of constant crisis, so that future social movements can be smothered in the cradle.

Regardless, we're six months into this case and hundreds of defendants have committed to pursuing trials in a round of status hearings this month. A growing number of defendants have committed to rejecting pleas that aren't universally offered to all co-defendants, and over 100 have agreed to reject any cooperation with the state. Fundraisers have been organized by defendants and defense committees to gather the funds for legal and travel costs. The Mid-Atlantic General Defense Committee has initiated a support campaign to drop the charges.

When repression strikes our communities, solidarity becomes our strongest defense. While this process has been traumatic, it has produced countless beautiful relationships of support among co-defendants, supporters, and our communities. Those relationships and bonds of trust have the power to resist this political persecution, and we will continue to organize a collective defense together.

July 4th - Call for an International Week of Solidarity with #J20 Defendants July 20-27

We are calling for a Week of Solidarity with the J20 defendants from July 20 to 27, 2017. July 20 marks six months from the initial actions and arrests during Donald Trump's inauguration, and on July 27, a motion to dismiss the charges will be argued in court. The case has finally begun to receive the media attention it warrants; with this court date approaching and the cases underway, this is a crucial time for a second Week of Solidarity. Send reportbacks, photographs, and inquiries to J20solidarity@protonmail.com.

On January 20, 2017, thousands of people came to Washington, DC to protest the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump. In the early morning, blockades shut down security checkpoints and discouraged people from attending the inauguration itself, while impromptu marches and direct actions occurred throughout the day. There was a spirit of defiance in the air.

Iconic images circulated almost immediately, from the punching of white supremacist Richard Spencer to pictures of a limousine on fire. These were only the most spectacular images, however, of a day that was characterized by generalized disruption.

Midmorning, an "anticapitalist and antifascist" march of several hundred people made clear its opposition not just to Trump but also the system that made Trump possible. Led by banners reading "MAKE RACISTS AFRAID AGAIN" and "TOTAL LIBERATION FROM DOMINATION," the disruptive march took the streets of DC to the sound of fireworks and anticapitalist chants. After about half an hour, the march was brutally attacked by police, who used chemical and crowd control weapons along with physical force, then boxed in ("kettled") and mass-arrested people. Everyone on an entire city block was arrested and given the same charge of felony rioting. Approximately 214 arrestees now face a total of eight felony

charges, including conspiracy and destruction of property. All of the J20 defendants are now facing up to 75 years in prison.

A great deal has happened in the six months since the inauguration. Confrontational protests have taken place across the continent, challenging the political landscape shaped by Trump's election. Participants have stood up to emboldened white supremacists, disrupted airports in the face of anti-Muslim bans, blockaded proposed pipeline routes, set up sanctuary spaces and rapid response networks against ICE deportations, and much more. In turn, states are passing legislation aimed at further criminalizing protest and limiting resistance.

The J20 case fits into this wave of repression. The police seized and hacked phones in an attempt to strengthen the government's case, and subpoenaed social media accounts. They raided an organizer's home in DC. Arrestees had their personal information leaked online. The prosecution filed additional charges, essentially accusing the entire group of breaking the same handful of windows. All this has disrupted the lives of the defendants in the J20 case, who have lost jobs, incurred legal expenses, and been forced to make repeated trips to DC. The majority of cases are now headed to trial, with a handful of trials set for November and December 2017 and the rest scattered throughout 2018. Despite the fact that the state forced a large number of strangers into this situation at random, the majority of defendants are working together, responding to the charges in a collective way.

In order to continue to build our capacity to counter state repression and strengthen our interconnected struggles, we are calling for a Week of Solidarity from July 20 to 27, 2017, to make support for the J20 defendants widely visible. July 20 marks six months since the initial actions and arrests; on July 27, a motion to dismiss the charges will be argued in court.

We call on supporters to organize events and actions in solidarity with the J20 defendants throughout the week. Be creative and strategic! Help cultivate a spirit of resistance and mutual aid! Some ideas and areas to focus on during the week include:

- **Fundraising** – As with any legal case, fundraising for legal and travel costs continues to be important. You can consult a list of regional fund-raising sites [here](#) and make donations to the general DC fund [here](#). One easy fundraiser activity would be to organize a screening of the new subMedia film “No Justice ... Just Us: Movement Defense against State Repression”. Other ideas include bake sales, raffles, speakers, or benefit shows. Some folks have also made t-shirts and tote bags.
- **Take Political Action** – The J20 arrests were so plainly illegal that even the DC city council has funded an investigation into police abuses that day. This could turn up evidence useful to the defendants, but only if it takes place soon! During the Week of Solidarity, flood the DC Office of Police Complaints with demands that the investigation happen NOW. For more details, [go here](#).
- **Outreach** – One reason these prosecutions are possible in the first place is the lack of visibility around the case. Find ways to spread the word, with an eye toward translating visibility and public awareness into the capacity for material and emotional support. If you are part of an organization or have connections to one, ask it to endorse the “Statement of Solidarity,” or write and release your own statement against the prosecution in solidarity with those arrested on J20. Circulate statements widely among all the networks you have access to.
- **Increase Visibility** – Design posters and decorate your town with them. Several poster designs are available [here](#), but more designs are always welcome. Consider designing handbills or other agitational materials. Share them in the days before the Week of Solidarity. Drop banners. Paint graffiti. Set up an information table at a public event or space. Spread the word on social media; try to persuade people who are well known to take a public position. Organize public visibility actions to spread the word about the case; international readers could consider taking action at US embassies to demand that the charges be dropped as a means of raising awareness.

- **Build Connections** – Use the Week of Solidarity as a means of connecting struggles. The J20 defendants aren't the only ones facing felony charges for their resistance or presence at political events. Organize joint events to benefit other defendants as well. Think of ways to connect across movements, using such events as a stepping-stone toward building robust and combative movements that can withstand repression and take the initiative.

- **Build Capacity** - It's also important to remember the many and varied reasons that people took to the streets on January 20. Those are at least as urgent now when so many people are facing charges. It is imperative that people not turn away out of fear of repression or isolate themselves. That is what the state wants. We must meet these charges with defiance and continued resistance. We must respond not just as supporters but also as active comrades in a shared struggle.

Finally, we encourage folks to visit DefendJ20Resistance.org to sign up for e-mail updates about the case, or follow "Defend J20 Resistance" on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

July 7th - Interview with J20 Prisoner Dane Powell

by Bloc Party (*It's Going Down*)

Dane Powell, a J20 defendant, was sentenced in D.C. Superior Court to serve 4 months of two 36 month sentences, with 2 years of supervised probation to follow. In late April he accepted a non-cooperating plea deal.

On January 20th, as Trump was being sworn into the office of the presidency, thousands of people gathered across downtown Washington D.C. for various types of protests, ranging from the blockading of the parade route entrances to marches through the city. During the anti-capitalist and anti-fascist march, several hundred people were kettled by the D.C. police resulting in the arrest and charging of over 230 people. Since that day there have since been a handful of charges dismissed for legal observers and journalists, though some remain charged, as well as additional charges for the remaining 214. Those charges could add up to over 75 years in prison if convicted.

One of those J20 defendants, Dane Powell, chose to take a non-cooperating plea deal that was offered to him. Facing over 14 felony charges, Dane reviewed the evidence against him with his attorneys and felt it would be best to accept the plea offered. Bloc Party reached out to Dane early along in his plea process and offered to support him by providing a platform from which he could speak, share his story, and initiate the long-term support he is going to need.

We spoke with Dane about his charges, the process of his plea agreement and what support looked like through these last near six months.

Bloc Party: People came from all over the so-called U.S. to protest the inauguration of Trump. You clearly felt drawn to be there, what motivated you to resist on January 20th in D.C.?

Dane: I had just left Standing Rock. I knew that our work wasn't done and that Trump wanted this pipeline pushed through regardless of who it hurts. That's the thing with capitalism and Trump personifies that to me. We've always had those two shitty options, capitalism lite or fucking full throttle. I witnessed the blood, sweat, and tears that went into the movement at Standing Rock. The battle just moved from treaty land to their front fucking yard. Funny thing, my oldest daughter told me she was mad at me because I could have let other people do it. I let her know that we can't live our lives hoping for someone else to come and fix things for us. When we, or anyone else, is faced with insurmountable oppression we must use our own two feet and hands to dismantle it. She now understands why I went.

Bloc Party: There were a lot of people present at Standing Rock who had come to D.C. and converged with others from all different fronts of struggle. It was definitely inspiring to see that on January 20th! A lot of your co-defendants have talked about what it felt like when they got out of jail, walking out to hundreds

of people cheering and hugging them. You were arrested in a slightly different situation than your other co-defendants. So how was that experience for you? Did you feel supported from the beginning?

Dane: I knew support was there after I got out of jail but not really much while I was inside. I read how everyone else was singing songs of solidarity in their cells. I was arrested the same time as other comrades were getting out of jail on the 21st. It was nice having my partner there for me when I got out of jail, but that was about it. We spent two or three days in DC after that just trying to make it back to Florida. Those extra couple of days there weren't so bad. The freedom was nice. My lawyers have been there for me 100% and have been amazing. When it came to support from the group in general it was slow to start off with. I don't think people knew the seriousness of my situation in the beginning. From the day I left, I had a felony on me. That was bumped up to six and then again to 14 felonies. Support started ramping up a bit more before I took my plea, but I was depressed with everything so it was really difficult on me. Overall, I feel fully supported but the local support in DC and from other groups around the us.

Bloc Party: Being depressed and having a difficult time with those kind of charges makes sense. Many of our close friends and comrades that have faced down heavy charges with long prison bids attached have expressed that same feeling. In your situation the U.S attorney used some pretty dirty tactics against you in this plea deal, using something called a wired plea at one point. Can you talk about that part of the process? What did support look like through that?

Dane: This was about the time that support really started kicking ass. The wired plea really took a number on my mental health. My partner and I would have both had to take a plea. They would have plead to misdemeanor rioting and I would have got what my final plea is for, felony rioting and assault on a police officer. If I hadn't taken this plea I would have been taken out of the box for the possibility of probation. We decided not to take (the wired plea) together and the day before my last status hearing my lawyers called and said that I could get that plea un-wired. The only catch was there needed to be an insulating statement so I couldn't testify at my partners hearing. I ran this through both our attorneys and they were good with it and said it won't help the state.

I was arrested for my involvement in the J20 protests in the capitol of the united snakes. I stood as a defendant with others. By the time the smoke cleared, I was looking at 140 years in prison for my actions on January 20th. I took a plea deal, pleading guilty to two of the 14 charges. After seeing the evidence the government had against me, I knew this was the best route to take while still sticking to the non-cooperation agreement between over 100 of the 214 defendants.

As far as support, I think at this point I was really shutting myself off to comrades, friends, and family so I wasn't really seeking support like I should have been.

Bloc Party: Asking for support can be so difficult at the exact moments we need it most. It's good that you felt you had attorneys on board that were working in your very best interest. Around the time you took this plea is when the support structure in D.C. and regionally really started to coalesce. How would you describe your experience of support since then?

Dane: Support has been great. They have been there since day one. I haven't always wanted support but I knew they were there and had my back. That definitely made things a hell of a lot easier for me. This is the first time that I've been arrested for something this big and it really feels like everyone who is part of support is family.

Bloc Party: Having done a large amount of legal support in the last few years, there is something noteworthy about the J20 support structure that you hit on, that feeling of family. Maybe that is what it's like to have support from your comrades versus people who just parachute in from elsewhere. It has felt very important to us to highlight to people that the very best legal support doesn't come from people outside your movement, but the people within it. What things do you wish you'd know before J20 that you know now?

Dane: I wish I would have known more about collective defense. Being thrown into something and having to learn it while your life is at stake is a hell of a lot harder than knowing it beforehand. Another hard part was knowing who to trust. If there's peeps out there who want to help, please join a local support group and get to know who is going to be supporting you when you get into some shit and vice versa.

The hardest part of all this for me was having to explain to my crying daughters what was happening to their father. To my children: I love you with all my heart and these walls will only separate us for a short time, but walls of repression could separate all of us forever. Your father only wants those repressive walls torn down. If you have children, make sure they know why you fight before it is too late.

Bloc Party: Yes! We try and highlight this for people as well. The best time to prepare for repression is when you start resisting, because the repression will follow. If there isn't a local legal support infrastructure in your town, find some homies and get that shit in place before you need it. It's one of the reasons we love the Tilted Scales Collective, their book and the organizing they've taken on around this!

You'll be sentenced in a few days. What do you want people to know about you, this process and your co-defendants?

Dane: I want comrades to know that I went to jail with a smile on my face. I want my comrades back in Florida to carry on doing the amazing things we have been doing. One thing I can't stress enough is do not ever underestimate the state. Practice the tightest security culture you can implement personally and within your group. They will use everything against you, even if you think there's no way in hell this could hurt you. Don't post shit on Facebook! If you don't want that post from 3 years ago being shown to a federal judge when some shit goes down, don't post it.

I wish I would have been able to get to know my co-defendants better before my sentencing. I truly hope that after all this is done we can get to know each other a lot better. Hell, might even have a party every J20 on K and 12! I want my co-defendants to know that I support them in every way possible and I wish I could be in this fight with all of you all. Stay strong! Thank you again to support for everything that you all have been doing for us!

I'd like to give a huge shout out to all my comrades and all the J20 support that have been by my side since this whole process started. I give thanks to all of you. And just know that as I walked into jail on the 7th I had a smile on my face. I also want to give a thank you to IGD for allowing me to (say what) I wasn't really allowed to in court.

Bloc Party: Thank you so much for talking with us! We know that this is a stressful time for you, your family and community. Everyone at It's Going Down is sending you loads of loving solidarity! We'll be sure to update everyone on how they can continue to support you and your co-defendants.

July 15th - Ex-Military Man Accused of Bombing Air Force Office Faces Less Time than J20 Defendants

Currently, over 200 people that were mass arrested on January 20th in Washington DC in a massive police kettle face up to 75 years in prison. The group as a whole, which was kettled for hours by the police, attacked with chemical weapons, and denied access to food, water, and bathrooms, is being charged with both conspiracy as well as collectively breaking all the same bank and corporate windows. Police are also now being sued for sexually assaulting several arrestees while in jail and lawyers are attempting to have the case dismissed for lack of evidence.

The repression of J20 defendants which until now has been kept out of the media, is also part of an ever growing push by the Trump administration and local governments to clamp down on social movements and demonstrations, with variety of states passing bills which further penalize protest and increase fines and charges. Meanwhile, as both the Alt-Right and conservative media perpetuates an image of themselves as

victims in the face of ‘left-wing violence,’ actual far-Right violence is mounting in an almost daily stream of murders, arson attacks, and acts of intimidation and terror.

One case that really puts this all in perspective is Monday’s Air Force office bombing that took place in Bixby, Oklahoma. The chief suspect is Benjamin Roden, 29, of Tulsa, an ex-military man who comes from a military family and was last registered as a Republican. According to news reports and posts on Roden’s own Facebook, he became upset at the military after he was not allowed into the Marines and was not able to secure employment as an electrician.

Angry, Benjamin carried out various acts of vandalism against the Air Force office that culminated with him throwing several pipe bombs at its storefront and then riding away on a motorcycle. When FBI raided his home, they found a large amount of bomb making items and supplies.

According to news reports, Benjamin now faces:

[B]etween 5 to 20 years on each of the explosives charges and up to 10 years in prison on each of the destruction of federal property charges.

While this is no small potatoes, at the same time, it’s amazing that Benjamin still faces less time for literally blowing up a government military office, than those who are accused of being in a group of people that smashed the storefronts of corporate chain stores and banks.

Moreover, the tone of the FBI in addressing this case is very telling, as it downplayed the bombing and was quick to state that they potentially do not consider it terrorism:

Authorities said early Tuesday they were investigating the case as possible “domestic terrorism” because the target was a military office. But later in the day, the FBI hesitated on defining it as terrorism, saying until a suspect and motive were found, “we’re treating it as strictly a criminal investigation with an explosive device.”

“It’s a little bit comforting that they didn’t want to kill anybody,” FBI Special Agent Jessi Rice said at a press conference. “Obviously they would have done it in broad daylight if that were the case. So, from that standpoint, it’s a positive.”

Rice said he probably did it at night to hide, “didn’t want to be out in public with this incident.”

What this says about the kind of system of power and control we live under is clear: if you’re part of a revolutionary group that wants to overthrow the State, even walking down the streets with a mask on might get you locked up. If you’re some disgruntled white guy who gets mad and decides to throw a couple bombs around because you’re angry at your former employers – eh.

Moreover, what is clear is that the acts themselves are not important, what is important is who is doing something and the context of why.

It’s also important to point out that the FBI was founded and designed to crush revolutionary movements and organizations. When it was first organized in the early 1900s, it set its sights on the anarchist movement and the anti-capitalist labor union the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In the 1960s and 70s, under COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program), it carried out a campaign of assassinations, misinformation, and sabotage of a variety of radical movements. In the 1990s, it attacked groups such as Earth First!, and even helped to plant a bomb under the car of Earth First! organizers Judi Bari and Daryle Cherney. After 9/11, the FBI worked to streamline repression and surveillance and the coming together of federal authorities along with local police departments through the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which has become notorious for monitoring social movements and protest groups.

Then, just like today, the purpose of the FBI isn’t to keep people safe, but to safeguard the interests of those in power against the majority of the population.

But while the FBI has been heavily monitoring both the anarchist movement and people within the Muslim community in the US, often pushing young and impressionable people to become entrapped in manufactured FBI bomb and terror plots, far-Right and white nationalist terrorism has been on the rise. Since Donald Trump has been in office, various watchdog groups have reported an explosion of racist, sexist, and anti-immigrant violence and attacks across the US. Despite this, the Trump administration has cut funding to initiatives aimed at combating far-Right terrorism.

Moreover, ironically in the recent past various members of the so-called 'intelligence community' have even attempted to sound the alarm against far-Right terrorism, only to be literally laughed out of their jobs.

The most famous is analyst Daryl Johnson, a former member of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Johnson was tasked with determining if there would arise credible threats to Barrack Obama should he become President after the 2008 election. Johnson reported that a mix of an African-American president, far-Right anger over immigration, and the recent economic recession would all help fuel an insurgent far-Right movement that would become violent. Turns out Johnson was right.

When Johnson's findings became public however, people within the right-wing media such as Fox News took it as a threat that DHS would soon send FBI agents to Tea Party rallies and begin monitoring 'ordinary Americans.' Right-wing pundits went on to claim that there were 'no Timothy McVeigh's out there' and that Johnson was manufacturing threats in order to justify repression. Keep in mind, this was only several years after the FBI had done just that through the JTTF as it spied on and surveilled the anti-war movement in the lead up to and in the aftermath of, the Iraq War in 2003.

What is most ironic about this ring-wing hysteria, is that this is the same fear that 'news' such as Fox now peddle against the anarchist and antifascist movement, and openly calls for more and more repression, harsher laws, and outright violence against anyone that stands up to the Trump administration.

In the ensuing backlash of his report, Johnson claims he was pushed out of the DHS, and soon left of his own accord. In the years since Johnson quit the DHS, his predictions have sadly come to pass as far-Right terror has skyrocketed.

5 Jul - Lawmakers Fail To Fix New York's Failed Stingy Parole System

In 1978, 28-year-old Mujahid Farid was sentenced to 15 years to life for attempted murder. By 1993, when he first became eligible for parole, he had earned four college degrees as well as certificates for numerous programs. During his 33 years in prison, Farid was denied parole nine times.

MORE:

by Victoria Law (*Village Voice*)

Farid's accomplishments didn't matter to his parole commissioners, who repeatedly rejected his requests for freedom based on the nature of his crime. Farid told the Voice that at one hearing he asked, "Is there anything I can do to make myself eligible for release?" Though no one answered, he said he could tell by the changes in the commissioners' facial expressions and body language that they didn't appreciate his question. He was denied again. The denials ultimately added 18 years to his incarceration.

In 2011, he appeared for the tenth time. Nothing had changed for Farid except for the two commissioners before him, both of whom had high rates of granting parole. That was the year he was released.

Ish Igartua has a similar story. In 1988, Igartua, then 25, was sentenced to 25 to 50 years for assault. He was 50 the first time he appeared before the board. By then, he had obtained his GED as well as his bachelor's and master's degrees. He had helped run programs, taught college classes, and worked for the prison chaplain. He had letters of support from prison officials and even former chairman of the parole board Robert Dennison. But, like with Farid, the decision came down to the nature of his crime, and parole was denied.

Two years later, Igartua appeared before the board again. This time, he recalled, commissioners “went on and on about my accomplishments. They read every letter [into the transcript].” Then they denied him. He was finally granted parole in 2016 after nearly 30 years in prison.

These experiences are so common that many critics describe the state’s parole system as broken. In April 2017, of 850 parole applicants, only 32 percent (or 273 people) were released. Of the 577 people denied, 83 were aged sixty or older. By law, commissioners must consider participation in rehabilitative programs, release plans, and the risk of recidivism, not simply the nature of the crime. But for many, the denial still boils down to that original crime.

Parole commissioners are political appointees, nominated by the governor and confirmed by the senate. Commissioners can serve an unlimited number of six-year terms, sometimes outlasting governors and legislators.

This year, Governor Andrew Cuomo chose not to reappoint three commissioners — Julie Smith, James Ferguson, and G. Kevin Ludlow. However, this decision doesn’t necessarily signal their departure from the parole board. The governor can place them in an indefinite holdover period, meaning they can still make decisions as parole commissioners. Alternately, Cuomo can dismiss them, removing their power to decide prisoners’ futures.

According to parole reform advocates, Cuomo’s office has said it would not keep these three commissioners on the board past December 2017. A fourth commissioner, Lisa Elovich, has resigned from the board. The state’s legislative session ended on June 21.

In addition to appointing six new commissioners, Cuomo also chose to reappoint two, including W. William Smith, appointed in 1996 by then-governor George Pataki and known during his twenty years for frequently denying parole.

Nineteen state senators opposed Smith’s reappointment. “If we look at Mr. Smith’s record on the parole board, serving longer than any other commissioner, I think it is clear that, sadly and unfortunately, he does not believe in rehabilitation,” Bronx senator Gustavo Rivera stated during the confirmation hearing. Referring to transcripts from past hearings, Rivera lambasted Smith for “his unprofessional conduct, his humiliating conduct to individuals who have acknowledged their crime.”

Rivera invoked the name of 70-year-old John Mackenzie, who committed suicide after his tenth parole denial. Smith was one of the commissioners who denied Mackenzie parole during his final three hearings, despite a judge’s order barring him from participating in the last hearing.

Despite the unprecedented opposition, 32 votes were needed to block Cuomo’s choice. Smith was reappointed.

John Mackenzie’s daughter Danielle is dismayed about Smith’s reappointment. “The only reason ever given to my father [for the denials] was the nature of his crime. So you don’t believe in rehabilitation. Or you don’t believe in it in his case,” she told the Voice.

Still, she and other advocates are optimistic that these acts signal the start of greater change: “I think my father would be happy that the sacrifice he made was the catalyst for this change.”

They also recognize that more work is needed. “We need to demand a full board,” said Mujahid Farid, now the lead organizer for the Release Aging People in Prison campaign, noting that there are five vacancies left on the nineteen-commissioner board.

Advocates are also asking for community oversight, noting that commissioners are currently accountable only to the governor. “I don’t know any other job without any sort of evaluation system,” Danielle

Mackenzie said, noting that, as a teacher, her performance is regularly evaluated. "Lives are depending on this."

"I want to do things so that people can come home," Igartua said. Reflecting on his nearly 30 years behind bars, Igartua acknowledged that "some people are not ready to come home. But even they deserve a fair shot at the parole board without being prejudged."

6 Jul - Delbert Africa Denied Parole; Given 5 Year Hit

On July 6th, we received word from our Brother Delbert Africa that he was denied parole yet again, and what is even more sadistic and bothersome to us is the fact that Delbert was given A FIVE YEAR HIT.

MORE:

Delbert was informed in a meeting today by Parole Board Member Leslie Grey of the decision that he would not be paroled. This is the same Board Member who has very strong ties to law enforcement officials across the state of Pennsylvania. Ms Grey stated again that the main reason for denial is due to the fact that Delbert is a threat to the safety of the community. This is the same Delbert Africa who PRISON OFFICIALS at SCI Dallas APPROACH REGULARLY and ask to intervene and stop gang fights and gang violence IN THE PRISON, and he is deemed a threat to safety.

Delbert also stated to Ms Grey that the community is in support of his release. That's why there are petitions, letters, and phone calls all aimed at the parole board in support of parole for Delbert and other MOVE Members from members of the community all over the world. So who is this community that is threatened?

We will tell you. It's the law enforcement community who feels the threat and is working in conjunction with none other than the Fraternal Order of Police. Mark Koch, a former cop and lifelong member of the Fraternal Order of Police, sits on the parole board. The connection is there for people to see and people are opening their eyes and seeing this. Ms Grey went so far as to boldly tell Delbert "next time you come back to make sure you have no write ups and the recommendation of the prison." Delbert has had the recommendation of the prison for every parole hearing since 2008.

The Parole Board has been blatantly pushing this issue of the safety of the community since 2008 with our family, yet they have done their best to sweep under the rug the issue of former board member Randy Feathers, a known pedophile who had to resign in the wake of his involvement in the kiddie porn scandal with disgraced former Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane.

The Pennsylvania Parole Board is indeed ensuring that MOVE Members remain in prison and also DIE in prison. We lost Phil Africa in 2015 and Merle Africa in 1998. We cannot afford to lose another one of our family members. Our next course of action will soon follow but we are continuing to urge people to sign the petition urging the United States Justice Department to investigate the case of The Move 9. People can sign the petition at causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9

This is a long fight that we are not backing down from and are encouraging people to continue in this fight, not just for our family, but your family and friends and the political prisoners and all the men and women being done wrong by parole boards across the country.

7 Jul - An Open Letter to Liberals & Progressives from the Black Bloc

Typically, we only include updates directly relating to, or written by, political prisoners. We are including the below from It's Going Down because we think it's valuable for the current moment in time.

MORE:

The deep state isn't coming to save us. Trump isn't going anywhere and it seems clear that the elites have no desire to remove him. Meanwhile war and another economic collapse lay just on the horizon, as

violence, intimidation, and threats from the far-Right seek to attack anyone who isn't loyal to the billionaire king. As tens of thousands mobilize in Hamburg, Germany against neoliberal capitalism and as both repression and resistance at home heat up, progressives and liberals must ask themselves a simple question: *what side are you on?*

In recent days, the mainstream media has been rocked by the story that Donald Trump has yet again shared social media created by the white supremacist Alt-Right, and secondly that neo-Nazis from within that movement have begun to threaten journalists and their family members for reporting on the story.

Only several days before, liberal and progressive groups organized protests to demand that Trump be impeached and were met in numerous cities by Alt-Right counter-demonstrators who used violence in an attempt to push them off the streets. In San Diego, members of the Alt-Right carried flags with racist symbols and attempted to surround protesters, in LA and Philadelphia clashes broke out, and, in Austin, the far-Right attempted to block the march's route.

The targets of the Alt-Right weren't just the black bloc, anarchists, or antifa—they were anyone who dared to come out that day and voice their displeasure with the president. Ironically, despite the permitted rallies hardly even being disruptive, in the months leading up to them, far-Right conspiracy theory websites such as *InfoWars* claimed that they would lead to violent riots backed by the Democratic Party in an effort to play up hysteria.

This fear mongering was then kicked into overdrive with the shooting of Steve Scalise by James Hodgkinson in Virginia, as the Right used it as a vehicle to pump up fears of “left-wing violence.” While at the center of this demonization are anarchists and antifascists, as the recent viral NRA video shows, the target has widened to the entire Left, including liberals and progressives.

All of this is taking place against an immense backdrop of rising far-Right violence, murder, and arson attacks, which have been almost completely ignored by both the media and the Trump administration. This violence is also growing in the midst of a massive campaign attacking the working class, pushing through repressive measures that defile civil liberties and the right to protest, slash taxes on the wealthy and regulations on the environment, and move billions of dollars in services and healthcare out of the hands of the poor and most vulnerable and into the pockets of the billionaires, CEOs, and the 1%.

At the same time, the Trump administration has launched a campaign to gather voting information from all states in order to launch a countrywide version of Cross Check, the same system that struck millions of mostly Democratic black and brown voters from the rolls in 2016. Heading the campaign is Kris Kobach, who is both the Kansas secretary of state as well as the legal counsel of the Federation of American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a white nationalist think tank.

All around us, lines are being drawn. Trump and his administration seek to roll back decades of gains won by the working class as well as remove entire sectors of it from the United States, reignite the so-called drug war, push us to the brink of ecological collapse, and bring the US into military conflict with a host of rival governments.

Despite the severity of the situation, much of the Left seems preoccupied with wringing its hands. We are entering into a time when we no longer have such luxuries.

Stuck in the Center with You

Since taking office, Trump has lost more and more legitimacy, turning again to the only base that still supports him: the insurgent far-Right. At the same time, the drum of civil war is being beat from the NRA to Fox News against anything even remotely resembling “the Left,” as much of the population turns against the billionaire.

The failure of Trump to hold onto the vast majority of his base and his immense unpopularity has led to massive anxiety from the far-Right, which wholeheartedly supports him. *It is also making the situation more and more violent.*

But in the face of this growing threat, the Democrats have shown themselves to be incapable of doing, much less stopping, anything. Likewise, symbolic and passive protests have gotten smaller and smaller, as the political, military, and economic elites find Trump to be either a useful instrument or something to be at times ignored and other times supported.

In response, publications such as the *New York Times* rally for a coup from the military against Trump and for the “Democrats to return to the center.” In short, the political elites at the head of the Democratic Party have learned nothing from the Sanders campaign and have no interest in representing the people who vote for them, much less confronting the power of capital in this country that has led to disaster after crisis after recession.

Liberals and progressives: *your world is on fire.* The institutions, “checks and balances”, and very government that you placed your faith in is decaying all around you, and at every turn the state seeks to roll back any assemblage of democratic oversight or accountability. The Democrats openly plan to move *to the Right*, as standards of living, the environment, and basic entitlements, rights, and freedoms are attacked. This isn’t a time for you to strengthen these institutions, *it’s time for desertion.*

For decades, liberals and progressives have sought to be the managers of social struggle, setting both the terms and conditions for action and ideas. Thus, they tried to push people out of the streets and back into politics. They said that rioting and blockades “alienated the middle class”, only to see those very tactics grow in size and popularity. Then, as Trump ascended to power, they attempted to portray themselves as #TheResistance while gaslighting anyone who attempted to fight back.

Yet ironically, who came to the aid of liberals and progressives last weekend as militia members, Alt-Right trolls, and “based stickmen” attempted to attack them at impeachment marches across the US? It wasn’t the Democratic Party, it wasn’t the non-profits, the socialist vanguards, or the heads of unions—it was *the black bloc.*

It is time for liberals and progressives to lose their illusions about the anarchist movement and our tactics, because, quite frankly, you have no one else willing to fight for you.

Building the Capacity to Defend Ourselves

Confrontational and disruptive social movements have been the only things that have helped defeat some of Trump’s proposed policies, such as the Muslim Ban 1.0, and it is only mass disruptive action that has the hope of putting a wrench in the gears of everything from the deportation machine to the drive to war.

Furthermore, it was the intense resistance that anarchists and antifascists engaged in after the election, at the Inauguration, and against the far-Right that made it harder for the regime to roll out the totality of their agenda, for fear of full-scale revolt. Is there any doubt that it is the threat of mass upheaval in the wake of the passing of the American Health Care Act in the House that is holding it up in the Senate? *Of course not.*

So far, however, #TheResistance has amounted instead to liberals and progressives mocking Trump supporters and sharing clickbait about the latest and more egregious aspects of the Trump administration. What is needed now is not a Left version of Alt-Right meme culture, but a strong and robust movement that reaches out to all sections of the working class and poor people, regardless of race, geography, gender, or sexuality.

And in doing this work, we wholeheartedly believe that our movements and struggles need the capacity to defend ourselves; from the violence of the state and its police to the far-Right, which seeks to act as an auxiliary force to the state.

To stand firm in our class and community interests, to reject patriarchy, colonialism, and white supremacy—*that in itself is confrontation*. In doing so, we will come up against both the state and its far-Right defenders. With this reality in mind, we must devise ways of protecting ourselves and our movements. From those on the streets, to those behind a keyboard, to those publicly organizing, first and foremost our goal must be to defend ourselves, our struggles, and our movements.

Reaching Out to Vast Sectors of Society

Right-wing pundits boil everything down to culture and claim that “liberal elites” in the coastal cities have forgotten the vast majority of the country that is rural, white, and traditionally conservative. Liberals fire back with attempts at mocking rural people as “uneducated” and “white trash,” as people who are unable to grasp the fact that candidates they elect are screwing them. At the same time, most liberals are also unable to grasp the fact that since the rise of the Clintons in the early 1990s, the Democratic Party has become the party of Silicon Valley, investing its interests not in the working class and poor, but instead with the neoliberal elites in the tech industry.

In reality, both of these positions offer nothing to the vast majority of Americans. Rural America is not all white nor strictly conservative; in fact it’s home to the greatest majority of black, brown, and Native people in the entire country. At the same time, while many whites voted for Trump out of fear and “white anxiety” around changing demographics in the United States, many also were disgusted by neoliberalism that has gutted entire sections of the country to the highest bidder. *Behind every fascism, a failed revolution.*

What is needed in the face of the neoliberalism of the Democrats and the proto-fascism of Trump is a project and force that unites people – not around support for the government and its legitimacy to rule, and not around false and manufactured notions of “community,” but instead around the shared interests of the mass majority of Americans whose very labors and existence makes those on the top rich and powerful.

This means creating a force that is able to connect the similar interests of people across vastly different walks of life that are directly opposed to the elites who control this system. This means talking with people and passing out literature everywhere from gun shows to hip-hop concerts. It means mobilizing in solidarity with Native communities and those in Flint, Michigan who don’t have access to clean drinking water. It means organizing and fighting in our neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, and schools but, moreover, finding how to link these struggles against common enemies together as we forge bonds that can unite people across racial lines.

But in order to do so, we need a force that doesn’t just *talk* about creating a movement, nor one that puts all its efforts into selling Bob Avakian DVDs or simply getting as many members as possible. What we *don’t* need is a bureaucratic force whose power comes through supposedly *representing* the interests of people, especially in the political process. What we need is a movement that can *do* and *accomplish things*. We need a movement that can be a material force across a vast geographical terrain that fights in the interests of everyone who is exploited and excluded from this structure of domination—taking territory, building power, and meeting our needs directly.

But while we must fight and confront Trump and the far-Right, if we have no alternative waiting in its place, then we are simply keeping the seat warm for the next neoliberal government to come in and start all over again.

Creating an Alternative to Capitalism

Across the world, anarchists, autonomists, and anti-authoritarians are organizing, fighting, and building alternatives: from free grocery programs to free clinics, from workplace organizing on the outside to organized groups of prisoners on the inside, from blockades of pipelines to building alternative media centers.

We know that we cannot separate fighting against domination and exploitation without the project of building a different world at the same time.

In the face of everything that the dominant system and the far-Right is throwing at us, we urge you: *join us.*

10 Jul - Russell Maroon Shoatz Update: Oscar is Free! Krasner Won! Rebel Elegant!

Here is the latest from the Free Maroon newsletter. It's been a few months since Maroon's support committee last touched base and they hope all are keeping well and finding steady inspiration in the justice work they know is happening.

MORE:

The national political mood seems to grow heavier and heavier by the day, via the various scandals rocking Trump's White House and the seemingly intractable epidemic of unpunished police terrorism on black communities—exemplified last month in the acquittal of the officer who killed Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota, followed by the killing of Charleena Lyles in Seattle, Washington. But we've also seen cause for optimism in a number of recent developments: the release of longtime Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera; the Jackson, Mississippi mayoral victory of Chokwe Antar Lumumba, son of former Republic of New Afrika leader Chokwe Lumumba; and the Democratic primary victory of esteemed civil rights lawyer Larry Krasner in the campaign for Philadelphia's next District Attorney, a campaign to which Maroon supporters have contributed valuable time, energy, and resources.

Maroon Expresses Solidarity with Oscar Lopez Rivera

On the recent release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera, Maroon shared with us this brief note of support:

Comrade Oscar: It is with great joy that I send these few words of solidarity and love.

Your release is a great victory to reward the struggle that you and countless others have sacrificed in the name of; a respite for you, those closest to you, as well as those who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with that freedom-seeking humanity.

Here in the prisons of Pennsylvania, many are aware of the struggle, and a number are recounting the time spent with you at that Marion federal hellhole!

Many younger comrades are earnestly hoping they can make arrangements for you to visit this state, as well as some of its lockups. Your presence would strengthen their determination to continue to struggle for many of the same things you and so many others have sacrificed for.

Maroon Reviews *Rebel Elegant*, A New Poetry Chapbook from Newsletter Editor Raphael Cohen

Maroon has also shared with us his review of newsletter editor Raphael Cohen's recent poetry chapbook:

My friend and comrade Raphael Cohen has produced an enjoyable, insightful, and socially useful book in *Rebel Elegant: A Tribute To Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf* (2016, Select Start Studio, Oakland, CA). Raphy seamlessly weaves together a masterpiece of poetry, biography, and sociopolitical history and commentary on Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, once an amazing athlete, and now an unsung paragon of integrity—on and off the professional basketball court. It's a piece of history that needs to be both recognized and studied, alongside the stories of 1968 Olympic icons John Carlos and Tommy Smith, as well as Muhammad Ali, and the present-day struggles of former 49ers' quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Raphy's book stunned me! How could I have missed Mahmoud's career? The Denver Nuggets' leading scorer. A practicing Muslim. An outspoken, controversial, ostracized man of integrity and progressive convictions. Someone I would love to have joined a younger Raphy in admiring and supporting.

Oh, I know how: When a firestorm was swirling around him in 1996 because of his decision not to stand for the national anthem, I had no access to either TV or radio, and reading material in my hellish Control Unit prison was also tightly censored and greatly limited.

Anyway, Raphy's prose, poetry, commentary, and insights, as well as the large number of retrieved and assembled photographs, not only quickly brought me up to speed, but did so in a manner that seemed effortless. The gifted and hard-working author translated Mahmoud's remarkable life story into easy, enjoyable, and valuable information.

Raphy is definitely speaking to us when he writes:
all the time

i tell my people
who adore hoops
and abhor injustice

look to Mahmoud

rebel
elegant

*For those interested in purchasing a copy of *Rebel Elegant*, you can do so at paypal.me/rebelelegant1/10. Half of all sales from Maroon newsletter subscribers will go to the campaign. Just write "Maroon" in your purchase through the PayPal link.

10 Jul - Based on Recent Rulings: Ten More Cases Dismissed

A big win for water protectors last week, 10 of the cases arising from October 22, 2016 that were set to go to court on Thursday July 6 and Friday July 7, 2017 were dismissed.

MORE:

The 10 defendants were facing Criminal Trespass and Engaging in a Riot charges and seven of the 10 were represented by the Water Protector Legal Collective (WPLC).

All of the cases stemmed from the mass arrests that took place in Standing Rock on October 22, 2016 and are much the same to the recent proceedings on June 29, 2017 when a not guilty verdict was reached at the Morton County District Court.

The motion made by Assistant Morton County State's Attorney Brian Grosinger read, "Based on the rulings on the trial for June 29, 2017 in respect to the State anticipates substantially the same evidence in these cases." Upon finding out the order to dismiss was granted WPLC Attorney Brian Fitzpatrick, whose client was one of the 10 defendants, stated: "The State's Attorney, in my view, acted on his ethical duty to dismiss any case that he cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt. These cases fall into that category. I applaud him for doing the right thing."

These water protectors were some of many who on October 22nd were part of prayer and support groups who law enforcement told to disperse from a field west of Highway 1806, near sacred sites and the DAPL Easement. There has been no investigation or determination of whether these were even lawful orders to disperse. Notwithstanding, before water protectors could leave, they were surrounded and kettled in by law enforcement in a field and arrested. WPLC Attorney, Andrea Carter said of the case dismissals, "what is

responsible for us prevailing in these cases is not only tireless legal advocacy but more fundamentally the strength and courage of the indigenous peoples' culture and values, the support of thousands of allied people locally and nationwide, weaving new narratives against all odds and in conditions of extreme unfairness and disparate treatment."

The first set of six joined cases of water protectors who were arrested on October 27, 2016 will go to court on July 14, 2017. On Oct. 27, approximately 147 of the estimated 400 or so water protectors were arrested after leaving camp to walk, pray and raise awareness. Most of the arrestees are waiving their right to a jury trial fearing they, sadly, cannot receive a fair trial in this area. There is another possible trial and two final disposition hearings on July 14th and 11th respectively which involve individuals who were also arrested while in prayer either on October 27th or on December 18th approaching Turtle Island.

July 15th - Motion to Dismiss Class C Felony Against Brennon Nastacio

On Friday July 14th Assistant States Attorney Gabrielle Goter of Morton County filed a Motion to Dismiss the Class C felony charge of Terrorizing that had been filed against Water Protector Brennon Nastacio.

The charges against Mr. Nastacio arose from a highly-watched incident on October 27, 2016, where Mr. Nastacio confronted and persuaded DAPL security guard Kyle Thompson to hand his AR-15 semi-automatic rifle over to BIA Police without harming anyone or being harmed himself. Until today, Mr. Nastacio faced a potential five-year prison sentence.

In her Motion for an Order of Dismissal, Assistant States Attorney Goter noted there is "significant doubt as to whether the State could meet its burden of proof with regard to Terrorizing."

"This was a case where Mr. Nastacio acted to protect himself and others," his attorneys Bruce Nestor and Jeffrey Haas stated. "He should have been thanked and not prosecuted for his bravery."

The State dropped the charges against Mr. Nastacio just days before the scheduled July 18 deposition of North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation Special Agent Scott Betz. Mr. Betz played a major role in turning the arrest of Mr. Thompson with a loaded semi-automatic rifle into a criminal prosecution of Mr. Nastacio and two other Water Protectors. Depositions were also scheduled for two FBI agents involved in the transfer of Mr. Thompson from BIA custody to the Morton County Jail, and for Mr. Thompson himself.

Information recently obtained by the media revealed that TigerSwan, a private paramilitary security firm, was hired by DAPL's parent company, Energy Transfer Partners, with the mission to "find, fix, and eliminate" opposition to the pipeline. TigerSwan worked closely with law enforcement to infiltrate protest camps, produce pro-DAPL propaganda, and aid prosecutions. TigerSwan acted in a supervisory capacity over Leighton Security, Mr. Thompson's employer.

Mr. Nastacio's dismissal comes the same week that six other Water Protector cases were also dismissed by the Morton County State's Attorney. On October 27, Water Protectors were arrested when the North Camp was brutally cleared by law enforcement. Individuals sitting in peaceful prayer were rounded up and charged with misdemeanors of Engaging in a Riot and Maintaining a Public Nuisance. The six dismissed cases are among the over 140 arrests made on October 27 that are scheduled for trial in Morton County over the next four months. In its motion, State's Attorney Allen Kopyy acknowledged a dismissal was appropriate "out of concern they could not meet the elements of the crime as charged."

WPLC board member Wasté Win Young added, "the vast majority of criminal charges filed by law enforcement and the Morton County State's Attorney against Water Protectors are legally and factually unsupported. The overwhelming number of dismissals and acquittals to date, even in the context of a judicial process deeply biased against Water Protectors, demonstrates that law enforcement in North Dakota allied themselves with paramilitary private security forces to suppress a peaceful, public protest movement, and defend the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline without regard to the threat it posed to the planet, water, and sacred sites."

10 Jul - A Nation at War -- With Itself!

Please read the transcript from one of Mumia Abu-Jamal's latest commentaries.

MORE:

Ever since the recent U.S. Presidential election, the distance between the voting public seems to have widened.

One side sees the President as essentially illegitimate -- the other side sees those who voted against the President as basically disloyal.

The differences are a chasm, with vastly different views of where the country is going.

Nor is this a 'new' phenomenon.

Alexis De Tocqueville, a brilliant political scientist who penned the classic work, *Democracy in America*, visited the U.S. and was struck by the distances between American political parties. De Tocqueville wrote:

The parties by which the Union is menaced do not rest upon abstract principles, but upon temporal interests.

These interests, disseminated in the provinces of so vast an empire, may be said to constitute rival nations rather than parties [204].

De Tocqueville, writing in the early 1830s, foresaw the coming of the U.S. Civil War, and this some 30 years before the first blow was struck at Fort Sumter, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1861.

The parties that exist today are different political animals, but they still stand in contention against each other.

Bipartisanship is but a mirage, as each side fights for supremacy, and ultimately, for Power.

China's modern-day founding father, Mao Zedong (1893-1976), once wrote that "Politics is war without bloodshed."

When we look at recent events in Washington, we may have to rethink that idea.

11 Jul - Prisons and Other Maladies of the Racist State: Reading *Blood in my Eye in the Era of Mass Incarceration*

The Social Science Research Council's "Reading Racial Conflict" series continues with a reflection on the evolution of mass incarceration policies. Dan Berger engages the present through George Jackson's Blood in My Eye.

MORE:

by Dan Berger (*items*)

Surprising few but angering many, Jeff Sessions has used his post as attorney general to pull the Department of Justice away from enforcing civil rights. Sessions has sought to end federal lawsuits against or investigation into local police departments, instructed federal prosecutors to pursue the toughest possible sentences in their prosecutions, rededicated the DOJ to the War on Drugs (especially marijuana), and pushed for mandatory minimums. Lest anyone doubt the racist intent of his actions, Sessions's move to amplify the drug war has largely excluded the opioid crisis in predominantly white rural areas. He insists crime rates are rising, despite evidence to the contrary, as part of his push for more police and longer sentences.

These moves harken back to the "get tough" policies that had largely fallen out of favor in political rhetoric if not substantive policy. After four decades of untrammelled carceral expansion, the last decade has witnessed growing critiques of America's large prison system. The critiques have been fiscal as well as moral; locking up so many people for so long is expensive, if nothing else. Much fanfare greeted the bipartisan coalition of the Koch Brothers and the ACLU, of Newt Gingrich and Van Jones, demanding a reduction in the number of people imprisoned. The election of Trump generally, and the appointment of Sessions particularly, would seem to reverse the already modest criminal justice reforms launched in the Obama era.

That even tepid reforms could be so quickly reversed suggests the shallowness of inside-the-Beltway commitments to change. Yet, rather than a departure from the new spirit of reform, this moment starkly illustrates the limited vision and spirit of prison reform itself. Notwithstanding Obama's late-term commutations, then attorney general Eric Holder's deprioritization of some low-level drug offenses, and the millions of dollars flowing from both liberal and conservative foundations to confront mass incarceration, prison reform has not dented America's role as the world's leading jailer.

Rather than see these reform efforts as undermined by the rightward push of Sessions and Trump, we might better understand them as twinned projects of racist state violence. That was certainly the argument coming from inside American prisons at the onset of mass incarceration. George Jackson, among the most perceptive imprisoned intellectuals of the twentieth century, was killed in 1971—two years before the US incarceration rate began its hefty four-decade climb. Yet Jackson astutely parsed the degrading violence at the core of American punishment. Prison was not a foreign country: it was the suffocating air that racism and capitalism breathed. His posthumously published book *Blood in my Eye* demonstrated the primacy of the state in any consideration of racism, capitalism, and social change. Further, it outlined the limits of reformism to contend with the obstacles at hand.

Rehabilitation and other forms of violence

The problem of prisons exceeds what prominent reformers have thus far been willing to entertain. The task requires a step-by-step rethinking of US ideas of order. As Jackson wrote in *Blood in my Eye*, "The ultimate expression of law is not order—it's prison." Written in a San Quentin isolation cell and published in 1972, the book is a sharp indictment of the US state as the iron fist of racial capitalism exemplified in what we would refer to as the carceral state. Jackson was writing in a different era of punishment, a time when "rehabilitation" was a driving ethos of imprisonment—especially in California. After his death—in part because of his death—California traded rehabilitation for incapacitation: the point of prison was to get rid of bad guys, plain and simple.

Yet for Jackson, who went to prison at age 18 for a petty robbery and spent eleven years locked up before his death, the liberal ideal of rehabilitation was daily undone by the illiberal violence of imprisonment. "Anyone who can pass the civil service examination yesterday can kill me tomorrow," he wrote, as much in memoriam for the prisoners he had already seen killed as in fear of his own possible fate. "Anyone who passed the civil service examination yesterday can kill me today with complete immunity." Imprisonment was yet another manifestation of antiblack racism. "The question I've asked myself over the years runs this way: Who has done most of the dying? Most of the work? Most of the time in prison (on Max Row)? Who is the hindmost in every aspect of social, political, and economic life?" The experience soured him on the nature of liberal reform itself. "But if one were forced for the sake of clarity to define it in a word simple enough for all to understand," Jackson wrote of fascism, "that word would be 'reform.'"

The oppressive contract

Blood in my Eye is a difficult book. It is the opposite of Jackson's first, *Soledad Brother*, his 1970 book of letters, which remains better known and more widely read. Whereas *Soledad Brother* is tender and evocative, almost hopeful, *Blood in my Eye* is bleak and aggressive. It is a call to arms—not just against

prison but against the society that would create such citadels of violence. The book's militarism and machismo, present from the first page, can be hard to encounter. Its dedication, to "black Communist youth" and "their fathers," pledges to "criticize the unjust with the weapon."

Much of the book is an elegy for his 17-year-old brother, who died in August 1970 while raiding the Marin County Courthouse. Yet, by the time the book had been published, it functioned as a last will and testament for its author as well. A small-time armed robber turned proponent of communism and revolutionary violence, Jackson was the right-wing boogeyman personified. Ronald Reagan, William Buckley, and other conservatives wasted no time in turning Jackson's death into a call for greater toughness. Before they were "superpredators," Black working class youth like Jackson were "criminals," "thugs," and assorted bad guys. Whether the rationale was about rehabilitation or incapacitation, the solution was the same: more police, more prisons.

Therein lies the rub. Jackson's proposed remedies are jarring: the book calls for merciless, immediate, and unceasing armed revolt as the antidote to white supremacist capitalism. Yet Jackson astutely diagnosed imprisonment as the frontline of attack by a racist state. Misguided as a strategist, Jackson's diagnostic skills account for the book's enduring value. In a time when even criminal justice professionals opined about the coming abolition of prisons, Jackson documented the state's seemingly limitless capacity to repress. While white and middle class elements enjoyed the benefit of a social contract that allowed for economic advancement and political participation, Black and other colonized people faced what Jackson called "the oppressive contract." Racial capitalism defined the governing pact. "The economic nature of racism is not simply an aside.... Racism is a fundamental characteristic of monopoly capital. When the white self-congratulatory racist complains that the blacks are uncouth, unlettered; that our areas are run-down, not maintained; that we dress with loud tastelessness (a thing they now also say about their own children), he forgets that he governs."

Inequality, degradation, and (carceral) statecraft

Questions of governance and of state formation preoccupied Jackson. What scholars have begun theorizing as the carceral state Jackson described as the racist capitalist state itself. Its capacity for repression grows in tandem with its need to maintain inequality. Racism and capitalism cannot be reformed without remaking the state itself. Structured in inequality, the American state could only grow more repressive to its most unruly subjects. The context of *Blood in my Eye* is telling. Jackson wrote in the immediate aftermath of the civil rights reforms that had upended the segregationist state, offering new opportunities to African Americans and others. Yet he observed such changes from a prison cell, from which he was annually denied parole. The legal system that had implemented the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, that had rendered miscegenation and housing discrimination illegal, kept a growing number of Black and Latinx people in prison. Juridical change brokered no grand dreams of freedom.

Jackson was incarcerated in 1960s and killed in 1971. Over those eleven years, the demographics of incarceration shifted while the rate of incarceration remained roughly the same. In California, Illinois, New York, and other states, increasing numbers of Black men were imprisoned while fewer white men were. The casualties of deindustrialization and hyperpolicing—of economic marginalization and political repression—this cohort of Black prisoners entered prisons that were racially segregated and witnessing their own variant of massive resistance to civil rights. By the time the overall incarceration rate began its unprecedented four-decade climb in 1973, American prisons were vanguard institutions in the reproduction of white supremacy.

The degraded treatment of racialized bodies preceded and coconstituted mass incarceration. At the time *Blood in my Eye* was published, the United States held approximately 250,000 people in all of its prisons and jails. Today, there are 206,000 people serving life sentences alone—about one-tenth of the 2.2 million people imprisoned around the country. Mass incarceration is more than the exponential growth in the number of people in prison. It is about the increasingly repressive nature of American political life. Part of Jackson's insight, like those of other imprisoned intellectuals of the era, was the recognition that prisons

were a concentrated expression of state priorities: what happened there would happen to the rest of society sooner or later. And so the growth in repression can be mapped across a series of vectors: employment, housing, education, health care, and more. The criminal justice system is at the fulcrum of an expanded American brutality that has of late been most evident in the frequent killing of Black people by police.

"Imprisonment is an aspect of class struggle from the outset," Jackson wrote. "It is the creation of a closed society which attempts to isolate those individuals who disregard the structures of a hypocritical establishment as well as those who attempt to challenge it on a mass basis." The problem, then, was not the size of incarceration, its mass-ness, but the scale of degradation that the state enforced. "I refuse to make any argument with statistics compiled by the institutions and associations that I indict. Yet it is true that even official figures prove the case against capitalism. ... These statistics [of crime and incarceration] conceal the living reality."

Quoting a letter from his brother, Jackson insisted that "repression exposes," it educates. Decades of domestic warfare against communism, crime, drugs, gangs, and terror have indeed instructed the American populace. For decades, politicians have harvested this education to support a dramatically conservative vision that has ultimately brought us "career racist" Jeff Sessions as the nation's top law enforcement official. Yet listening to the victims and survivors, the refugees and orphans, of these home-front battles offers other paths. Between his fevered fantasies of violent vengeance, Jackson dreamed of a broad coalition—a united front—to take on "realistic day-to-day issues like hunger, the need for clothing and housing, joblessness," and imprisonment. Such a united front would eradicate racism at its root: in the vicissitudes of statecraft and the capitalist political economy it upholds. Jackson died likely having never heard of Jeff Sessions or Donald Trump. But he knew their agenda, and he knew the terms of engagement: repression versus redistribution, degradation versus dignity.

12 Jul - First, a Symbol of Occupy Wall Street. Then He Waded Into Syria.

Among the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), Robert Grodt was known as Demhat Goldman. RIP, Demhat Goldman!

MORE:

By Megan Specia (*New York Times*)

Robert Grodt was a volunteer medic at the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011, when he pulled Kaylee Dedrick, who had just been pepper-sprayed in the face, out of the crowd to treat her.

The pair quickly hit it off, and when video of Ms. Dedrick being sprayed in the face captured the world's attention, the spotlight turned to their budding romance. They again garnered media attention the next year, when they had a daughter — quickly nicknamed "Occubaby" — because she was conceived in the protest camp in Manhattan's Zuccotti Park where the pair had been camped out.

But then he made a dangerous decision that few young Westerners have made — joining a Kurdish militia fighting in the Syrian War.

On Monday, Kurdish fighters announced that Mr. Grodt died on the outskirts of Raqqa, Syria.

Mr. Grodt, 28, had no military training and no previous connection to Syria. But he found himself on the front line of one of the most dangerous conflicts in the world.

Continue reading the main story

"Rob felt strongly enough that he was willing to risk and ultimately give his life," said Ronald L. Kuby, a civil rights lawyer who met Mr. Grodt and Ms. Dedrick at the Occupy protest. "It was a powerful vision."

Mr. Grodt's family was told of his death by the State Department on Friday, said his mother, Tammy Grodt, but has few details on the circumstances of his death.

What they do have are two videos featuring Mr. Grodt and posted by the Kurdish militia he joined, the People's Protection Units, known as Y.P.G. One clip posted in June details his rationale for joining the group; the second was released on Tuesday when the Y.P.G. announced he had been killed.

In the video, Mr. Grodt says he joined the militia because he was committed to the Kurdish independence movement. Kurds, members of a stateless ethnic group, have been fighting for autonomy in the region for decades.

"My reason for joining the Y.P.G. was to help the Kurdish people in their struggle for autonomy," Mr. Grodt says. He also says he wants to fight ISIS.

The Y.P.G. has become a major player in the Syrian conflict, making up the bulk of coalition ground forces fighting the Islamic State in parts of the country. Although the coalition is backed by the United States, many of the Y.P.G. leaders have roots in the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., which is on the State Department's list of foreign terror organizations.

The coalition has pushed closer to the Islamic State stronghold of Raqqa in recent weeks, trying to wrest the city from the extremist group.

Mr. Grodt's mother said she saw her son's decision to join the militia as an extension of a life spent fighting for what he saw as a noble cause, and a penchant for fighting for the oppressed.

She remembered when he told her that he was hitchhiking across the United States from his home in California to join the Occupy Wall Street protest in New York.

"It was hard to let him go," she said. "I wasn't against it but I did tell him, 'You are a braver, more adventurous person than I am.' He was a medic for the movement, so it was not just to be there to cause upset. He was there for the solutions."

She said that in Syria, he hoped to be part of reconstruction of areas destroyed during battle, and he wanted to raise awareness for the Kurdish cause.

Mr. Grodt's sister, Meghann Conforti, said he had explained to her that he would be on the front line, information he initially kept from his mother.

After Mr. Grodt left the United States, he kept in sporadic contact with his family over Facebook and Skype, and he often spoke with Ms. Dedrick and their daughter.

On the same day that it announced Mr. Grodt's death, the Y.P.G. announced the death of two other foreign fighters: Nicholas Alan Warden, an American, and a British citizen, Luke Rutter.

Mrs. Grodt said she last spoke to her son in May. The recent intensifying of fighting in the region had made it harder for him to get in touch, she said.

The clip offers a final message to his family.

"Just know that I love you all, and there is a lot that goes unsaid," Mr. Grodt says, before directly addressing his 4-year-old, Teagan. "To my daughter, I am sorry that I am not there."

12 July - 2 alleged anarchists to stand trial for N. Philly vandalism spree

As always, read corporate media like the following with a critical eye.

MORE:

by Joseph A. Slobodzian (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*)

Two alleged members of an anti-gentrification anarchist group were ordered to stand trial Wednesday for participating in a riot May 1 by masked and black-garbed vandals who caused more than \$100,000 in damage to new housing in North Philadelphia.

Geoffrey Suchocki, 45, of Doylestown, and Patricia Monahan, 28, of Rhawnhurst, were held on charges of causing a catastrophe, criminal mischief, riot, conspiracy, and possession of instruments of crime after a preliminary hearing before Municipal Court Judge Henry Lewandowski III.

Both were arrested after 9:15 p.m. May 1 as they ran from a group of irate residents whose new homes and parked cars had been vandalized – windows broken and splattered with paint – by 30 to 40 people wearing masks and dressed in black.

David Lugo testified that he was on the balcony of his fourth-floor unit at Phillips and Oxford Streets when his roommate screamed and he spotted the mob smashing windows and throwing paintballs.

As the mob ran east on Phillips toward American Street, Lugo said, members began stripping off their masks and black clothing, revealing casual clothing underneath.

Lugo said he identified Monahan by the blond hair he saw as she removed her mask after she allegedly damaged a parked car. He said Suchocki, who also removed his mask, was near her and tossed something aside near where paint had been splattered on a building.

Lugo said he went down to the street to join his neighbors and was stunned by what he called “total destruction” along Phillips Street.

Surveillance cameras were ripped from the walls of buildings, windows were broken, and car windows were smashed. Paint was sprayed and thrown everywhere, Lugo said, and the word “leave” was spray-painted on one wall.

A short time later, Lugo testified, he saw a Philadelphia police cruiser pulling onto the block, and spotted Monahan and Suchocki in the back seat.

Lugo said he identified the pair as part of the mob and gave a statement to the officer.

Suchocki and Monahan did not appear to react to any of the testimony during the hourlong hearing. Each is free on \$5,000 bail.

The pair entered the courtroom looking anything but the disheveled alleged anarchists shown in their police mugshots.

Monahan wore a black dress complemented by bracelets and a pink beaded necklace and stylish eyeglasses, and her blond hair was freshly cut. Suchocki, his hair shorter than when he was arrested, wore a black-and-white shirt buttoned to the neck and black jeans.

Treva Borum, Monahan’s lawyer; and Michael Parlow, representing Suchocki, challenged Lugo’s identification of their clients. Both also questioned whether Lugo could really say that their clients had been among the vandals.

Lugo, however, stuck by his testimony, telling Borum: “This was a group of people rioting, sir. They were set on the destruction of this neighborhood.”

Assistant District Attorney Michael Manara also called three other witnesses.

Police Officer James Boone of the Highway Patrol testified that he and his partner, Christopher Culver, arrested Suchocki and Monahan after cutting off the fleeing pair with their cruiser in the 1300 block of North American Street. Both had ignored orders to stop, Boone said.

Boone said Monahan wore a drawstring backpack that contained a spray-paint respirator mask, pairs of gloves, a black shirt, a pair of pink and purple pants, and a car escape tool that lets a trapped person cut a seat belt and smash a window.

Police Detective Miguel Curet, of the East Detective Division, described a May 6 search of Suchocki's 2008 Chevrolet Silverado parked near the scene of the vandalism. Inside, Curet said, police found 10 flares, a can of spray paint with goggles, 11 rocks, and a stolen license plate.

Boone said he was stunned when he saw the damage in the neighborhood, which he said affected three city blocks: the 1500 block of North Palethorp Street, North Second, and Phillips.

Among the items left behind by the rioters, Boone said, was a black hat with the phrase "Star-Fucking Hipsters," and a canvas sign reading "Gentrification is death, revolt is life."

Amberlynn Kabana, the property manager for the six damaged buildings with 51 units, said that she could file insurance claims totaling \$90,000, but that this would not cover the cost of cleanup and paint removal or the damage to cars on the street.

Borum and Parlow said after the hearing that they believed their clients would be cleared by surveillance video of the May 1 incident.

30 Jul - Antifa Prisoner Benefit Show in Brooklyn

WHAT: Benefit Concert

WHEN: 9:00pm (8:00pm door), Sunday, July 30th

WHERE: Silent Barn - 603 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11206

COST: \$8-20, sliding scale

MORE:

Silent Barn in Bushwick, Brooklyn will host a benefit show for antifascist prisoners on Sunday, July 30. Montreal's anti-capitalist and anti-racist Oi/punk band Action Sédition will be playing their first U.S. show in quite a while. NYC's own antifascist anarcho! punk (A)Truth – plus a special guest – will open. This show is part of the 3rd annual International Day of Solidarity with Antifascist Prisoners.

Featuring:

Action Sédition (Montreal) Anti-capitalist and anti-racist Oi/punk.

<https://actionsedition.bandcamp.com>

(A)TRUTH (New York City) Antifascist anarcho! punk

<https://atruth.bandcamp.com>

Proceeds split between NYC J20 defendants and antifascist prisoners outside the US.