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Updates for February 13th

24 Jan - 59 People are Still Facing Felonies for Protesting Trump's Inauguration

Last year, on January 20, 2017, protesters from across the country marched through the streets of Washington, D.C., to express their opposition to Trump's election before they were "kettled" by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), a maneuver in which police surround large groups of protesters, preventing people from leaving the area without being arrested.

MORE:

by Caolan Iomlan (*Teen Vogue*)

The "Disrupt J20" event brought the detainment of at least 200 people, injury to six police officers, and claims of \$100,000 worth of damage, according to USA Today.

A year later, and nearly one month since the acquittal on all charges of the first of those arrested to stand trial, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia in January dropped the charges for 129 of the defendants. The remaining 59 defendants will still face felony charges carrying a possible sentence of more than 60 years in prison.

Defend J20 Resistance, a group supporting those arrested and charged after the protest in 2017, claims that shortly after the march began at 10:20 a.m. on the day of Trump's inauguration, police began kettling. Those detained were held on the corner of two streets for several hours, finally being taken to jail around 8 p.m., according to the group. Pepper spray appears to have been sprayed indiscriminately, as shown in this video. Police allegedly denied the detainees any access to food, water, or restrooms, according to a lawsuit filed by the ACLU.

Some detainees, including Shay Horse, a photojournalist who is a plaintiff in the suit, say that MPD officers strip searched them and grabbed their genitals, and say they "were subjected to manual rectal probing" during their arrests. After detainees were taken to jail, where they were allegedly kept until the following morning, police seized their cell phones, wallets, and other personal belongings. In many cases, the police reportedly lost track of which items belonged to which detainee. Those arrested were eventually charged with a variety of offenses, including felony rioting, conspiracy to riot, and property destruction. Even if a particular arrestee was not individually involved in property destruction, the prosecution argues that by being present at an event where property destruction is taking place, each individual is responsible.

Prior to the prosecution's recent decision to drop the charges for many of the defendants, the cases against the J20 arrestees had been divided into multiple trial blocs, each bloc encompassing fewer than 10 defendants. The first group of trials began on November 15, 2017.

Many of the protestors at the Disrupt J20 event wore black clothing and covered their faces, a tactic known as "black bloc," which is often used to create "mass anonymity" and "protects practitioners from the threat of post-action doxxing by white supremacist groups," as well as helps protestors act without fear of police violence and retaliation, according to The New York Times. However, some arrested at the J20 event were journalists, legal observers, and bystanders.

Some J20 defendants say they continue to deal with the trauma of their arrests. Shay Horse stated during a press conference last June, "A couple of fingers on my left hand are still numb. I continue to suffer stress and anxiety. I have trouble sleeping. I wake up every three hours. I'm still trying to come to grips with what happened."

MPD replied to Teen Vogue's request for comment on the allegations of mistreatment and the case, saying, "Each year, the men and women of MPD protect the rights and ensure the safety of thousands of First Amendment assemblies, demonstrations, and protests. During the 58th Presidential Inauguration, there were thousands of individuals who exercised their constitutional right to peacefully assemble and speak out for their cause. Unfortunately, there was another group of individuals who chose to engage in criminal acts, destroying property and hurling projectiles, injuring at least six officers. Fifty-Nine defendants are pending prosecution after being indicted by a grand jury on felony charges related to rioting. As with any pending criminal or civil matter, we will continue to support and respect the formal legal process. Moreover, all instances of use of force by officers and allegations of misconduct will be fully investigated."

Some defendants claim to have experienced a variety of repercussions due to their charges in the year since January 20, 2017. Michael Loadenthal, a defendant from Ohio, recently told Al-Jazeera, "Having defendants act extra cautiously in their political activities for one to two years, and having to exist with the looming possibility of life in prison and massive fines, is part of the punishment itself." He describes facing aggressive behavior from police during routine traffic stops, struggling with massive legal fees, and the travel costs necessary to be present at his court dates in D.C., and being unable to apply for jobs that require a criminal background check. Brittne Lawson, a nurse, told HuffPost that she had to quit her job due to the length of her trial. (She was part of the first trial group, which was acquitted of all charges.) Rosa Roncales, a firefighter in Virginia, was reportedly moved to a desk job after her arrest, a local affiliate reported. Elisabeth Lagesse, a former Ph.D. student in chemical engineering, says she was forced to move to Washington, D.C., with her partner — also a defendant — in order to deal with the financial stress of the trial. She told HuffPost in early December that she has yet to get back the cell phone seized during her arrest. In a letter published in The New York Times, she said that the J20 cases "illustrate a critical problem in the justice system: Prosecutors have the power to single-handedly destroy lives, and there are few consequences for abuse of that power".

In the indictment, the prosecution alleged that the defendants are responsible for the actions of those who destroyed property along the route of the march. During the opening statement of the first trial bloc, Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Kerkhoff stated, "We don't believe the evidence is going to show that any of these six individuals personally took that crowbar or that hammer and hit the limo or personally bashed those windows of that Starbucks in."

One reason the prosecution seems intent on securing convictions of the remaining arrestees is that it may limit the city's liability in countersuits against the police department, such as one being filed by the ACLU; a staff attorney for the organization described the "extreme tactics" used by the MPD on January 20, 2017, as "unjustifiable and unconstitutional." The ACLU also believes that "MPD's wanton and vindictive conduct on January 20 chills free speech". The city of Washington, D.C., seems to wish to avoid an outcome like that of the 2002 protest arrests against the IMF and World Bank, in which the city was forced to pay out millions of dollars to protesters arrested by tactics similar to the ones allegedly used on J20, a point seemingly made by Commander Keith Deville's testimony during the recent trial of the first bloc of defendants that "criminal convictions in this case would perhaps limit our civil liability in the matter."

The prosecution has also attempted to gather huge amounts of information on people who may not even have attended the Disrupt J20 event. Web hosting company DreamHost says that last summer, the Department of Justice served it with a warrant demanding all information it possessed related to Disrupt J20's website; DreamHost said the DOJ requested information on those operating the website, but that it also wanted the IP addresses of anyone who'd visited the page. DreamHost, with help from support groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation, refused to hand this information over to the government, arguing that the warrant was an "investigatory overreach and a clear abuse of government authority."

In the first trial bloc, which took place between November 15 and December 21, 2017, many of the arguments presented by the Department of Justice were refused by jurors, who acquitted all six defendants from that bloc on all charges. Judge Lynn Leibovitz threw out the felony charge of inciting a riot before it even reached jury deliberations, on the grounds that no reasonable juror could find them guilty of that count based on the evidence, The Washington Post reported. After closing arguments, the jury delivered their decision of full acquittal on those remaining charges — five felonies and two misdemeanors. The government notice regarding the prosecution's no longer pursuing charges on 129 of the defendants states that the change comes "In light of the legal rulings by the court and the jury's verdicts in the first trial of these cases." However, Joe (who's name has been changed for this article), a former defendant who was part of the group whose charges have been dropped, thinks that public pressure, including a recent call-in campaign, also contributed to the prosecution's decision. Reached by email, he tells Teen Vogue, "I don't think it was a coincidence that the DC US Attorney's Office dropped the charges a week after they received over 300 phone calls telling them to. The first case was deeply embarrassing for the prosecution. Direct and consistent pressure afterwards certainly eroded the state's confidence in their narrative."

The charges were dismissed "without prejudice," which means that the prosecution could technically reintroduce the same charges for those defendants at a later date. Additionally, according to Joe, it's still "super important to help the remaining defendants."

In the notice of intent to proceed, the prosecution states, "The government is focusing its efforts on prosecuting those defendants who: (1) engaged in identifiable acts of destruction, violence, or other assaultive conduct; (2) participated in the planning of the violence and destruction; and/or (3) engaged in conduct that demonstrates a knowing and intentional use of the black-bloc tactic on January 20, 2017, to perpetrate, aid or abet violence and destruction."

The government has requested that the court reschedule the remaining defendants' court cases, consolidating the remaining 59 cases to proceed "more expeditiously" with the trials. Meanwhile, Defend J20 Resistance is raising money to help support the remaining defendants, who are dealing with enormous legal costs, travel costs, and other expenses resulting from their arrests, as well as holding events in support.

30 Jan - New Essay from Walter Bond

Essay received via postal mail from Walter Bond (dated December 14, 2017, postmarked January 23, 2018, received on January 29, 2018)

MORE:

A month ago I got locked up in solitary confinement for going on hunger strike. I didn't eat for a week until I could get some resolution on my Vegan diet and my mail in a timely manner. I was appeased enough for me to come off hunger strike but by no means did I achieve anything like an unequivocal meeting of my demands. Not at all surprising in the federal prison system, the ultimate bureaucracy. And not at all surprising is the fact that I have been referred back to the highly repressive and suppressive CMU unit. A so-called counterterrorism prison unit of which I have already done over 3 years. And it would not even surprise me if they sent me somewhere worse than I've ever been. I mean, I had the audacity to demand food and mail, the horror!

So here I sit in the hole. The last time I was here was Father's Day after seeing a friend, a Puerto Rican, just like me, stabbed in the stomach. And the ensuing fight that broke out. The time before that it was the hole inside the CMU after I broke my hand on someone's very deserving face. I was refused medical treatment

for the telescopic fracture in my hand, although the doctor did tell me to aim with my top two knuckles next time.

In the last 7 odd years I have seen stabbings, beatings with locks, razor blade attacks, etc. Prison's not a pretty place. So here I reside in my concrete box. I have no idea for how long maybe another month, maybe a year. It's not my call, it's the systems and they have hated me ever since I showed defiance in the courtroom on sentencing day in Denver, Colorado.

I remember in my statement I said "prison is no great hardship to me." And you know what's changed since then...not a fucking thing! Not one fucking thing!

The Animal Nations still die by the billions, the earth is still raped by the multi-nationals and the bulk of us still play games and posture as the resistance, the concerned, and the self-righteous. I know a lot of people care or claim to. I know a lot of people hold signs, sign petitions, gather, speak, intersect, write poems, flyer, talk, type, visit websites, wear t-shirts with messages, listen to music with a message, or create "safe spaces." A whole lot of others preach, proselytize, split hairs that have already been split a thousand different ways, theorize and then have theoretical arguments about their theories.

Pobrechos, they just don't see the problems are real and acute for those in the cages, for them, for us, it's not a hobby, a game, a fever that will break in a few years. It's real. It's blood in your face. Behind so much of the efforts at educating and radicalizing is the coward's hope that someone else will do something, someone else will put their ass on the line and we can remain the educational catalyst for change, or the artistic one, or the spokesperson, so that somehow our words will become more important than our lack of action. So that the hard sacrifices are left to another.

You know why we have the trump nation we have today in the U.S.? It's because on the other side, the capitalists, republicans, racists, rednecks, big pharma, big agriculture, nationalists, religious fanatics (of every religion), slaughterhouse industrialists, etc. they don't care about symbolics. They care about tactics that work for their bottom line and against anyone or anything perceived as a threat. Ruthlessness. Ruthlessness that trumps (no pun intended) all the good wishes, positive energy, candle lightings, poetry slams, concerts, workshops or theoretical postulations of mentally overheated philosophy professors (and their wannabes).

Pacifism is born of privilege, often shields cowardice, and always crumbles in the face of the force of violence (unless itself lives under the shadow of violence).

And Animals that suffer and die (and for that matter live) in conditions, with tortures and deprivations far worse than anything you or I have experienced or even could imagine, deserve more than anything we, that's you and I, have done for them! I'm not the one to tell movements for Animal Liberation or for anarchy how wonderful we're all doing or linger too long on how far we've come because despite it all, the ALF, the ELF, Las Zapatistas, Black Panthers, Spanish Revolution, the 60's and all the liberation struggles of all human history it's not enough, it hasn't worked yet.

There is a tendency, a stream of consciousness that goes in our direction but unfortunately that runs in a channel that gets co-opted and perverted every time. And even more unfortunate is we live on a finite planet that can only be bled so dry before ecological collapse. I don't think it's hopeless, yet. But I do think we need to fight harder and quit making a mockery and a fashion out of the struggles for liberation.

And this will always be my gripe: "Demasiado generals y no hay soldados." "Too many generals and no soldiers." So here I am in my cage resisting as best I can, not so that you can write to me about how heroic

I am, chances are a few years after my release I will be shunned and despised by the same people that now ogle me. That's definitely the trend in the American Animal Rights movement.

I stand defiant against my own and others' injustice because it sickens me not to physically resist it. It sickens me to hold out a piece of paper to murderers and slavers and beg for recognition in corrupt and bureaucratic processes for a sliver of decency and when it's all said and done I wish you couldn't stand for it either. Animal Liberation, whatever it may take!

30 Jan - An Update from Casey Brezik

Please take time to read the following from anarchist political prisoner Casey Brezik

MORE:

Hey everyone. You may have noticed, I've moved to a new prison. This place, I'd say is better overall compared to where I was because we have access to more resources and more freedom of movement here. However, it's not without its challenges. For instance they are far more petty when it comes to rules and far harsher when it comes to punishment. I guess they're reminding us as we get closer to going home just how quickly they'll take our new found freedom from us. Almost as if they're actually anxiously waiting for an opportunity to do so. I'm sure that doesn't surprise anyone.

I've actually received my 1st violation here, already. I'm currently on living area restriction until the 25th. They got me for something I wasn't even aware I was doing. It cost me my job as a tutor. I had the position for less than a month. I don't even mind it, though. They said they'd pay me, but when it came time for my 1st paycheck...nothing. I was working four 10-hour days/week. Now that they fired me, I'll be moved to food service. It's not too bad. I worked there for a little over a week before taking the tutor job. I'll have more free time. I need it to get stuff done, too. I have some reading and writing I need to catch up on.

Hmm...What else? I've been attending A.A. and N.A. meetings regularly. That's been helpful to my psyche. Maybe it sounds corny, but I really want to get as far as possible with this Anarchists in Space thing. I don't believe that'll be possible if I'm getting high. My mentality won't allow me to do both. At the same time, I have to be honest in telling you I haven't been studying to send anarchists to space like I should be. I'm changing that. I've also abandoned studying Japanese in favor of studying solely for that purpose. Japanese will always be there for me.

Oh! And I want to thank everyone that sent me holiday and/or birthday wishes this past month. At first, I was trying to write back to everyone, but I realized that there were just too many and I doubt many of you were expecting to start a correspondence anyway. I will, however, write to you if you've sent me a letter with something more than just well wishes. If I miss you forgive me and write again. I'll get back to you.

Well, thank you everyone for the support you've shown and continue to show me. I appreciate you all and will be staying in touch. Take care of yourselves.

30 Jan - Red Fawn Fallis Followed Her Mother's Footsteps to Standing Rock-Now She Faces Years in Prison

Oglala Lakota Sioux activist Red Fawn Fallis pleaded guilty to two federal felonies, all but assuring she will receive a substantial prison sentence.

MORE:

by Will Parrish (*The Intercept*)

After spending a year in jail awaiting trial, Oglala Lakota Sioux activist Red Fawn Fallis pleaded guilty last week to two federal felonies related to her arrest while protesting the Dakota Access pipeline. As part of the plea agreement, prosecutors dropped the most serious charge against her, which would have carried a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence with the possibility of life imprisonment.

Fallis was arrested on October 27, 2016, during a large-scale law enforcement operation to evict pipeline opponents from a camp alongside North Dakota Highway 1806. After officers tackled Fallis and pinned her on the ground facedown, they allege that she fired three shots from a revolver underneath her stomach, which did not result in any injuries. Last month, *The Intercept* revealed that the gun in question belonged to a paid FBI informant who was in a romantic relationship with Fallis. The informant, Heath Harmon, had infiltrated the protest camps starting in August 2016 and was near Fallis's side for much of the day leading up to her arrest.

As a condition of the plea bargain, federal prosecutors dismissed the count of discharge of a firearm in relation to a felony crime of violence, and the state of North Dakota, which had previously charged Fallis with attempted murder, agreed not to reinstate or pursue any charges related to the incident. Prosecutors have recommended Fallis receive a seven-year sentence, although U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland can still impose up to 10 years in prison based on Fallis's guilty plea to civil disorder and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Fallis's attorneys are recommending a sentence of 21 to 27 months, including one year of time served.

In a statement explaining Fallis's decision to accept the plea deal, the Water Protector Legal Collective cited several negative pretrial rulings issued by Hovland, as well as the likelihood of jury bias based on a survey of potential jurors revealing strong antagonistic feelings toward anti-pipeline protesters. U.S. Attorney David Hagler declined to comment for this story. A Morton County Sheriff's Department spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

While law enforcement frequently cited Fallis's case to advance a narrative of anti-pipeline protesters as violent extremists, her supporters see her legal plight as only the latest episode in the U.S. government's long history of hostility toward indigenous people who push back against powerful government and corporate interests. More than 50 people turned out to support Fallis at her federal hearing in Bismarck on January 22; many expressed sadness and outrage about her likely prison sentence.

"As indigenous people, we're simply not allowed to act in defense of our children, land, or traditions without incurring severe punishment," said Eryn Wise, a member of the Jicarilla Apache and Laguna Pueblo nations who worked with Fallis at Standing Rock. "We're horrified they took another person from us who we may not get back for a long time."

Unanswered Questions

Fallis's arrest in October 2016 occurred amid a highly militarized police raid on land that would still belong to the Great Sioux Nation had the Fort Laramie treaties of 1851 and 1868 been honored. In a pretrial motion, Fallis's attorneys attempted to raise the issue in her case, arguing that the government had a burden to establish the law enforcement operation as lawful by addressing treaty rights in court. But Hovland refused to allow consideration of this broader historical context, instead making several orders to limit the case's scope. "This is not a complex case," Hovland insisted in a January 2 order.

Fallis's attorneys also filed several motions asking the government to disclose information related to the sweeping surveillance activities of public law enforcement and private security contractors hired by the company behind the Dakota Access pipeline. Drawing in part on stories and documents published by *The*

Intercept, they argued that Fallis's case could not be considered apart from this intrusive intelligence gathering, given that an undercover informant employed by the FBI had initiated a relationship with Fallis, and then made available the gun she was accused of firing.

As The Intercept previously reported, Harmon said he was recruited by the FBI after approaching his brother, a Bureau of Indian Affairs police officer, about "being an observer" of the protest movement. He gave conflicting accounts about the gun. On the morning after Fallis's arrest, he filed a report with the Mandan Police Department claiming it had been stolen two to three weeks prior. Later, in an interview with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, he said he'd last seen the weapon a few days before Fallis's arrest, having left it in her trailer at the water protectors' Rosebud Camp.

Defense lawyers for Fallis sought additional materials regarding Harmon's activities as an informant, contending that prosecutors had only turned over "sparse summaries" of his communications with the FBI rather than the more detailed reports that likely existed if the bureau followed its standard protocols. They also requested information on other covert operatives at Standing Rock. In a pretrial hearing, one of the officers who helped arrest Fallis had testified that law enforcement received a briefing on the morning of October 27, 2016, from either a law enforcement or private security infiltrator who was posing as a protester. Hovland ruled against these requests for discovery information.

Defense filings suggest the documents turned over by the government still included some new information on Harmon's activities. He had been "instructed to collect information on potential violence, weapons, and criminal activity," a defense motion noted, adding that Harmon's FBI contacts had recommended that he receive extra compensation to keep him "motivated for future taskings." The defense motion suggested that Harmon had been slated to testify against Fallis had her case gone to trial as scheduled.

Additional discovery requests rejected by Hovland pertained to the activities of private security agencies. Fallis's attorneys had challenged the legality of police operations at Standing Rock due to law enforcement's close collaboration with TigerSwan, a security firm hired to protect the pipeline. An ongoing lawsuit filed by the North Dakota Private Investigation and Security Board alleges that TigerSwan illegally provided security and investigative services in the state after having been denied a license to do so. A civil trial in that case has been scheduled for October 2018.

Following The Intercept's publication of a "links chart" prepared by a North Dakota fusion center identifying Fallis as a leader of the protest movement more than seven weeks prior to her arrest, defense lawyers asked the judge to compel the government to turn over all intelligence collected about Fallis and her activities. The judge ordered the government to "disclose all relevant information" concerning Fallis, including but not limited to her placement on the chart — but such disclosure will no longer be required given Fallis's decision to accept the government's plea offer.

A Legacy of Activism

Among the water protectors who gathered at Standing Rock, Fallis was known for her work as a medic and mentor to younger activists. According to Mia Stevens, a family friend, Fallis had dedicated her work to her late mother, Troy Lynn Yellow Wood, a prominent activist with the American Indian Movement.

Founded in 1968, AIM fought for the legal rights and cultural survival of indigenous people. According to Phyllis Young, a Standing Rock Sioux tribal member and longtime AIM member, Yellow Wood was at the center of many of the group's struggles and helped to establish Women of All Red Nations, which fought for an end to forced sterilization of indigenous women, among other causes.

By traveling to Standing Rock, Fallis was almost literally following in her mother's footsteps. In 1974, Young said, members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe invited AIM to an area at the confluence of the Missouri and Cannonball rivers known as Sacred Stone, which would later become the site of the first NoDAPL camp.

Until the 1978 passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, it was illegal for indigenous people to practice many of their traditional spiritual ceremonies. Standing Rock traditionalists decided to carry out a pipe ceremony at the site and sought AIM's protection to do so. Yellow Wood was among the AIM members who responded to that call, Young said.

Many of Fallis's supporters contend that her stature as a politically active indigenous woman played a central role in drawing the attention of law enforcement. "They just could not stand for us as Indians to talk back to them, and most of all, they couldn't stand for us as women to be talking back to them," Young said.

In early May, Fallis was granted a three-day furlough from jail to attend a memorial in Denver for her mother and grandmother. Young, who accompanied her to the ceremony, said Fallis had a emotional reunion with family members before receiving blessings at traditional ceremonies organized on her behalf. "They honored her far into night," Young said.

But while an older generation of AIM activists sees Fallis as having carried on the work of the organization, her case also represents a continuation of the infiltration that created fissures within AIM in the 1970s. Standing Rock Sioux tribal member Ladonna Allard, who hosted the Sacred Stone Camp, says people in the movement are "trying to deal with the whole fact of Heath Harmon and how he was able to get so close to everybody."

After spending a year in jail following her arrest, Fallis was transferred to a halfway house in Fargo. Earlier this month, federal marshals re-arrested her after she failed to attend a mandatory adult education course and returned late to the halfway house. At the January 22 hearing, both prosecutors and defense attorneys expressed supported for returning Fallis to the halfway house with the addition of GPS monitoring.

While Fallis's case has been one of the highest profile among the hundreds filed against anti-DAPL protesters, she is not the only one to face harsh penalties for her role in the protests. On January 21, attorneys for Michael "Rattler" Markus, another pipeline opponent charged with federal crimes related to the October 27 raid, announced that they had arrived at a plea agreement with the U.S. government. Prosecutors will drop the most serious charge against Markus — use of fire to commit a federal felony offense — in exchange for his plea of guilty to civil disorder. Prosecutors and the defense are jointly recommending a prison sentence of 36 months.

A sentencing hearing for Fallis is scheduled for May 31. Her attorneys intend to call several witnesses, defense attorney Bruce Ellison said at the hearing in Bismarck. Ellison is also a longtime attorney for Leonard Peltier, a member of AIM who was imprisoned for the killings of two FBI agents in the 1970s, in what many indigenous activists and human rights groups have labeled a wrongful conviction.

According to Eryn Wise, a member of the International Indigenous Youth Council, the young people who grew to admire Fallis at Standing Rock have only grown more determined as they've followed her case, particularly given the urgency of climate change and other environmental degradation, as well as the prevailing sense that their traditional lands remain under occupation by the U.S. government.

“What’s happened to Red Fawn has only inspired the youth to pursue this line of work more,” Wise said, “because they realize that without people standing up like she has, there won’t be a future for anybody.”

31 Jan - Ramsey Orta, Imprisoned for Filming Eric Garner’s Murder, Placed in SHU for 60 Days

Ramsey Orta, the man who filmed the brutal murder of Eric Garner, has been placed in the SHU (Security Housing Units, essentially prisons within prisons) for 60 days, the latest in a pattern of targeted harassment and abuse.

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Orta is currently serving a disgusting four year prison sentence after he was targeted by the NYPD for filming the death of Garner at the hands of the NYPD back in 2014, sparking riots, protests, and uprisings across the US. Garner himself was harassed over selling loose cigarettes, a murderous example of broken windows policing.

Since he began serving his sentence, Ramsey has been repeatedly harassed, assaulted, and attacked by prison guards, and has been placed in solitary confinement on multiple occasions.

What We Know

A call was made to the prison several days ago and we were informed that Ramsey was in the SHU after receiving multiple “tickets” by more than one corrections officer. At one point, Ramsey received two in one day.

One of his supporters received a letter on January 23 that said the following:

“How is everything? I hope all is well. As for me, I’m hanging in there. Still dealing with police fucking with me. I might be going to the box soon. I keep getting bullshit tickets. I just caught 3 in one week...”

Someone else in Ramsey’s support network visited him and said he looked really pale and was in a bad space. Ramsey says he is being continually harassed and violated. Ramsey’s legal support are doing their best, but this abuse is taking a toll on Ramsey, and he needs our support more than ever. We are asking folks to share this post.

You can also donate directly to Ramsey’s support using Paypal: officialramseyorta@gmail.com

1 Feb - International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee February Update

Things have been picking up in the Tampa area and throughout the world for Leonard.

MORE:

First, Leonard had a cold for over a week and there was concern as he is still recovering his strength from the heart surgery. He is better now, but it is extremely cold within the prison and during the cold snap here in Florida he had to get extra blankets to keep warm. The coldness extends to the visiting area where the visitors often wear sweaters or jackets and Leonard and other prisoners have on short sleeved jumpsuits. The prisoners are not even allowed to wear long sleeve undershirts or sweatshirts to stay warm in the visiting area for security reasons the guards say.

I saw Leonard this past Monday and he asked his supporters to write to:
Warden Charles L. Lockett USP
Coleman 1

Post Office Box 1023
Coleman, Florida 33521

Request that Leonard be given an operation for his prostate problem. Leonard saw a specialist two years ago for the problem and was informed that the procedure only takes 10 to 15 minutes. The doctor recommended Leonard have the procedure done, and Leonard has requested the surgery, but nothing has been done. Leonard said his enlarged prostate is causing him increased pain and discomfort. Also, on the health front we are still waiting for Leonard to get relief on his hip and knee problems. Even brother Turtle moves faster than the Bureau of Prisons when it comes to health care.

On a positive note I would like to introduce you to the Archangels of Justice who have taken up Leonard's case and will be producing a series of podcasts dealing with FBI misconduct and the constitutional violations in Leonard's case. Here is the link to the first podcast <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mStAoG4ZtKg>>. Please share this podcast with your friends and let us, along with Leonard, know your views.

On Tuesday night at a pipe ceremony on the Miccosukee land outside of Tallahassee, Leonard was presented with a pipe from his Odowa brother who carried the pipe from his family in the northeast. Here is a little part of the story. "My name is Paul Tobin (Coyote Song). Five years ago I made pipes for the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign. The Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign was a partnership between the Onondaga Nation and Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) to develop a broad alliance between the Haudenosaunee and their allies in New York and throughout the world... We would like to make a pipe for Leonard. We don't know if they are allowing him to have sacred items in prison. We would like to present it to you on his behalf." It was a beautiful ceremony and I was also gifted with a pipe. As thanks to our family in the north, we sent them home with one of the last drums made by Bob Robideau, a blanket, and t-shirts for the travelers. The pipe will be held at the national office per Leonard's request and when pipe carriers and Sundance sisters and brothers stop by to see Leonard and visit with us we will have a ceremony to smoke the pipe for Leonard.

There will be events on the 6th of February recognizing the start of Leonard's 43rd year in captivity. I will send out more events as they are sent to me. There is also a meet and greet for Leonard's attorney on February 11th to introduce him to the St. Pete and Tampa Bay area.

As you can see we have been very busy and while I always think of writing you all a quick note to let you what we are doing time slips away. So please accept my humble apologies.

And I want to thank all of you that have contributed money to support the office and Leonard's legal team. They are working diligently to craft a brief to get Leonard back into the court and on the road to his freedom! ALL donations big and small help with these efforts so please continue to buy merchandise (black AIM t-shirts are Back in stock), prints, and, if you can afford it, check with us about one of Leonard's original paintings.

February 6th - Leonard Peltier Statement

I am overwhelmed that today Feb 6th is the start of my 43rd year in prison. I have had such high hopes over the years that I might be getting out and returning to my family in North Dakota. And yet here I am in 2018 still struggling for my FREEDOM at 73.

I don't want to sound ungrateful to all my supporters who have stood by me through all these years. I dearly love and respect you and thank you for the love & respect you have given me.

But the truth is I am tired and often my ailments cause me pain with little relief for days at a time. I just had heart surgery and I have other medical issues that need to be addressed: my aortic aneurysm, that could burst at any time, my prostate and arthritis in my hip and knees. I do not think I have another ten years, and what I do have I would like to spend with my family. Nothing would bring me more happiness than being able to hug my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

I did not come to prison to become a political prisoner. I've been part of Native resistance since I was nine years of age. My sister, cousin and I were kidnapped and taken to boarding school. This incident and how it affected my cousin Pauline, had an enormous effect on me. This same feeling haunts me as I reflect upon my past 42 years of false imprisonment. This false imprisonment has the same feeling as when I heard the false affidavit the FBI manufactured about Myrtle Poor Bear being at Oglala on the day of the fire-fight. A fabricated document used to extradite me illegally from Canada in 1976.

I know you know that the FBI files are full of information that proves my innocence. Yet many of those files are still withheld from my legal team. During my appeal before the 8th Circuit, the former Prosecuting Attorney, Lynn Crooks, said to Judge Heaney. "Your honor, we do not know who killed those agents. Further, we don't know what participation if any, Mr. Peltier had in it". That statement exonerates me, and I should have been released. But here I sit, 43 years later still struggling for my Freedom. I have pleaded my innocence for so long now, in so many courts of law, in so many public statements issued through the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, that I will not argue it here. But I will say again I DID NOT KILL THOSE AGENTS!

Right now I need my supporters here in the US and throughout the world helping me. We need donations large or small to help pay my legal team to do the research that will get me back into court or get me moved closer to home or a compassionate release based on my poor health and age. Please help me to go home, help me win my freedom!

There is a new petition my Canadian brothers and sisters are circulating internationally that will be attached to my letter. Please sign it and download it so you can take it to your work, school or place of worship. Get as many signatures as you can, a MILLION would be great!

I have been a warrior since age nine. At 73 I remain a warrior. I have been here too long. The beginning of my 43rd year plus over 20 years of good time credit, that makes 60+ years behind bars.

I need your help. I need your help today! A day in prison for me is a lifetime for those outside because I am isolated from the world.

I remain strong only because of your support, through prayers, activism and your donations that keep my legal hope alive.

3 Feb - The Unpragmatic Debate by Political Prisoner Jalil A. Muntaqim

Jalil has been writing a lot lately. Please take time to read and engage his latest.

MORE:

With some degree of amusement I have been reading the debate between writers, scholars and academics regarding Cornell West's critique of Ta Nehisi Coates' analysis of Black life, Obama's Presidency, and the general struggle. While I am in agreement with the premise of Cornell's critique, there is a missing element. This missing element not only pertains to the critique, rather it is a broader philosophical and political issue encompassing the entire reality of Black existence and struggle in America.

While Black America is not monolithic in socio-political thought, some claim this diversity in thought and practice is a strength. I firmly unequivocally disagree to the extent division of thought and practice has never served Black folks well. Here is the crux of the West/Coates debate that has yet to be resolved, and won't be resolved until there is an effort to forge among Black folks unified and uniform determinations in struggle.

Hence, the issue before the academics and Black intelligentsia is the issue of class struggle within the nation-body of Blacks. Failing to establish a critique on class divisions permits the type of internal static divisiveness often to the detriment of the whole nation-body. There is no wonder why (neo)liberals/Black capitalists took one side of the debate, nationalists took another, and progressive/socialists yet another, by which none in totality reached the heart of the problem.

For example, in respect to Obama's residence in the White House, does anyone disagree that Obama is a Black capitalist-imperialist? He represented the velvet glove of the iron fist, the Black face of U.S. militarism and white supremacy. To deny this premise would be a delusional escape from the reality that America is a white supremacist capitalist-imperialist empire. The placement of a Black person in position to represent the interest of America's hegemony only served to cast the illusion of Black American inclusion in empire building. While there was a hue and cry lauding the first Black President as a historical event, which it was, there was an overwhelming failure by academics, scholars and the Black intelligentsia to divorce itself from the socio-psychological and emotional significance of Obama's election with the stark socio-economic and political reality of the system he represented. I admit to having also shed a tear embracing the historic moment, then quickly sobered up to the fact that a Black face in the White House would not significantly alter or change the socio-economic and political reality of Black folks here and abroad. [In fact, I wrote a poem/prose "The Obama-Nation" and for his second term "Obama Mania" expressing my sober concerns]. In this regard, Cornell's critique of Ta-Nehisi is correct. However, Cornell West's seemingly scapegoating Coates essentially relieved the entire (neo)liberal Black capitalist class of any consequential ramifications for the continued oppression/repression of Black people under the Obama administration. Ta Nehisi Coates represents the symptom of a larger and more virulent ailment, the failure to engage in class struggle toward national unity (See: We Are Our Own Liberators – Three Phase Theory for National Independence). The ostracizing of Coates should lend to a much broader discussion by writers, academia and scholars on their purpose when the Black body continues to be under racist assault. Is simply talking about these issues in the abstract enough, absent an analysis of the entire exploitative system producing these destructive/genocidal conditions, and an action plan of resistance?

When the Black intelligentsia are divided into (neo)liberal capitalist-imperialist, cultural-nationalist and/or progressive socialist camps, we find the majority of Black folks similarly divided in their personal and collective aspirations. It is just that simple! Thus, we find ourselves in a quandary, whereby white (neo)liberals find themselves in a spasm of delight witnessing how their anointment of Coates has instigated a public Black intellectual paroxysm that only serves to exacerbate divisions and the hardening of disparate camps. We've collectively forgotten the admonishment of Al-Hajj Malik Al-Shabazz that our differences should be hashed out behind closed doors, and to emerge to the public as a united front.

If there are to be any lessons learned from the historic debates between Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois and Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Martin L. King, Jr., at minimum it should be the above mentioned admonishment. My point is that to inhibit liberals or conservatives of any persuasion to negatively impact Black folks effort to unite, our intelligentsia will need to discern what is ultimately in the best interest of Black folks by engaging in class struggle. That is the task going forward, that is the call to action to the Black intelligentsia – if in fact they hold an unabated love for Black freedom.

We have come to an era in which Dr. King, on April 4, 1967, informed that “A revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth,” from government policy of what Dr. King identified as the “Triple evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism.” So, I raise the question: are these the times in which the Black intellectual community should focus on and devise the means and methods to prevent the destructive ramifications of the “Triple evils” ? Is it time for the Black intelligentsia to rise to the challenge of forging a “revolutionary value” and morality that seeks to challenge this government, rather than postulating personal critiques absent the organizational or institutional basis to rectify errors in socio-economic and political analyses? If so, then a call needs to be made by the most progressive Black intellectuals to establish a national consensus on political development and policy opposing the plethora of anti-Black conditions confronting Black folks: It is time for the Black intelligentsia to come out of their comfort zones, ivy towers, officious statuses and bridge the manifestation of theory into pragmatic nation-building. Failing to do so is tantamount to intellectual cowardice in the face of white supremacy’s violent resurgence!

4 Feb - Little Feather Reaches Non-Cooperating Plea Agreement

On Thursday February 8, Michael Giron appeared in federal court in Bismarck for a change of plea hearing as per the terms of a non-cooperating agreement with prosecutors.

MORE:

Mr. Giron, who is known as Little Feather, was charged with Civil Disorder and Use of Fire to Commit a Federal Felony Offense, arising from events of October 27, 2016. Under this plea agreement, the Use of Fire charge – which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and the possibility of up to 15 years in prison – will be dropped entirely, and Little Feather will take responsibility for aiding a civil disorder.

Subject to the acceptance of the plea agreement by Judge Daniel Hovland, who is presiding over the case, prosecutors and the defense will jointly recommend a sentence of 36 months on the Civil Disorder charge, although the judge does have the authority to go as high as five years. This is a non-cooperating agreement relating only to Little Feather’s own actions and does not require any testimony or information about anyone else.

Little Feather and his legal team were facing monumental challenges including the prospect of trial with a hostile jury pool, limited discovery, and the risk of a long prison sentence.

In December of 2016, WPLC brought in an expert to poll the potential jurors to determine the extent of local bias against Water Protectors. The findings were clear: 77% of potential jurors in Morton County and 85% in Burleigh County had already decided that defendants were guilty and many potential jurors have close connections to law enforcement or the oil industry.

Court records show that Little Feather’s legal team brought this data to the court’s attention, and filed a change of venue motion seeking to move the trial out of North Dakota, but that motion was denied.

Similarly, the court denied a motion to compel discovery and a motion to force prosecutors to search the records of private security and military contractors who coordinated closely with law enforcement throughout the encampment period, seeking critical surveillance and other records as well as determining the extent of the role of informants in the encampments.

Little Feather is a member of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, and was raised in Santa Barbara, California. He was invited to Standing Rock by his Lakota family members, where he worked tirelessly tending the sacred fire and serving the needs of elders, women and children living in the Oceti Šakowin

camp. In recognition of this dedication, local elders assigned him the role of peacekeeper, known in Lakota tradition as Akicita.

Little Feather is proud to have stood with Water Protectors against the Dakota Access Pipeline, and grateful to be a member of the Oceti Šakowin community. His time in camp was a cleansing experience that helped put him in touch with his spirituality and his indigenous identity, and opened his heart to a prayerful way of life that he looks forward to sharing with his family upon his release.

“Our time at Standing Rock was a life transformation for Little Feather and for our entire family,” said Leoyla Cowboy, Little Feather’s wife. “We are deeply grateful for all the support from our community and for all the teachings and the ceremonies that we were invited to attend in camp. We look forward to welcoming my husband home to continue to give back those teachings to others.”

“Little Feather is my hero. The whole family loves and adores him. He keeps us strong and we want him home with us. He is such a blessing to our family,” she added.

The change of plea hearing will be at 1:30PM on Thursday February 8, 2018 in Bismarck federal court before Chief Judge Daniel Hovland. Supporters are encouraged to attend to show solidarity with Little Feather and his family.

Little Feather has been incarcerated since March 9, 2017. Information on how to support him is available on his support committee website. He is represented by attorneys Peter Schoenburg of New Mexico and Timothy R. Lohraff of Washington.

This agreement comes shortly after plea agreements were announced for two other Water Protectors with federal charges: Red Fawn Fallis and Rattler (Michael Markus). There are three remaining Water Protectors with pending federal charges preparing for trials in the coming months and over 300 who have pending state charges.

4 Feb - End the isolation of Jamil Al-Amin

The following is an open letter to the Bureau of Prisons and state of Georgia by concerned academics.

MORE:

We are academics who have spent our careers researching the history of the civil rights movement, issues of racial discrimination in the United States, civil rights law, and the representation of minorities in the public sphere. We strongly believe that deepening knowledge of our nation's past is essential to informing progress in American politics and race relations today.

The acquisition of historical knowledge is strengthened considerably by having living participants in those histories recount their experiences. We are therefore dismayed to learn of the current restrictions placed upon one such prominent participant, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (formerly known as H. Rap Brown).

During the 1960s, Al-Amin was a national leader of the civil rights movement and was chair of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, one of the era's key organizations. As a civil rights leader, he met with President Johnson, spoke across the country, and appeared regularly in television interviews. He is currently an inmate at the federal prison at Tuscon, Arizona. He has been held in federal custody, on behalf of the Georgia Department of Corrections, since 2007.

Throughout the last decade, all requests for interviews by scholars and journalists have been denied by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Their decision is, in part, based on the Georgia Department of Corrections' view that Al-Amin is ineligible for interviews "due to the potential security risks." Letters to and from Al-Amin are usually held by the government for months before they are released. In these ways, Al-Amin is prevented from any form of practical communication with scholars who wish to document this history.

We understand that Al-Amin has been convicted of an extremely serious charge. However, we do not believe there is any reasonable basis upon which to deny him direct access to scholars and journalists. His story ought to be documented for posterity. In-person interviews with him in prison are essential for this purpose because he is 74 years old and is serving a life sentence without parole.

We thus declare our opposition to the restrictions placed upon Al-Amin and call on the Georgia Department of Corrections and Federal Bureau of Prisons to allow scholarly and media interviews and communication with Al-Amin. We will make the reasons for our consternation known to our own elected representatives and the public at large.

6 Feb - Court Postponement Not Necessarily Bad Thing for Mumia

After Mumia Abu-Jamal's 36 years of wrongful incarceration, the movement to gain his release has not wavered one bit.

MORE:

In fact, the movement is seeing younger faces, bringing new skill sets and vigor, sorely needed at this time when Mumia is suffering from unrelenting itching, all over his body, due to cirrhosis of the liver because of the delay in treatment for his active hepatitis C. On Wednesday, January 17, Judge Leon Tucker, Court of Common Pleas, ordered a hearing about a memorandum written by Ronald Castille, the former District Attorney, to Deputy Assistant Attorney Gayle McLaughlin Barthold, on the status of capital cases including Mumia's. Judge Tucker was seeking more information about what role Ronald Castille played in Abu-Jamal's case, as Castille was a Senior District Attorney during Abu-Jamal's original 1982 prosecution and District Attorney when Mumia was appealing his conviction at the U.S. Supreme Court.

During the hearing, newly elected District Attorney Larry Krasner, Assistant DA, said the office is now going to review all 18 cases, including Mumia's, to see just what role former DA turned PA Supreme Court Judge Castille played in these cases. If it can be proven Castille was heavily involved in Mumia's original conviction, which he was, then Mumia should win an opportunity to appeal his conviction in the PA Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Terrence Williams v. PA* in June of 2016, that it is a violation of the Constitution for a judge to rule in a case he was formerly involved in as prosecutor. Judge Tucker ordered a status hearings on February 26 and March 27, to make sure the current DA and his staff are doing what they claim, reviewing the 31 boxes of case files that led to Mumia's conviction. More often than not politics makes strange bedfellows, which is why supporters of the new liberal District Attorney, Larry Krasner, were rightfully alarmed when Krasner appointed former DA-turned-Judge Ronald Castille to his transition team. No matter what, in 30 to 60 days Mumia's lawyers and supporters will learn more factoids about Castille's role in securing a conviction against Mumia. When that happens, Tucker should grant the appeal Mumia needs to overturn his fraudulent conviction and be released from his death sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

The courtroom overflowed with Mumia supporters from Philadelphia, New York City, Washington D.C., Baltimore and France as well as outdoors in the rain and snow chanting "No Justice No Peace, Until Mumia Abu-Jamal's Release." After the hearing and outdoor press conference, supporters came indoors, to Arch Street Methodist Church for a hot lunch and debriefing on what happened in court.

Despite Mumia's case being postponed, the good news is Judge Leon Tucker appears to be growing impatient with the District Attorney's office. We know that nothing short of a political struggle and movement in the streets will ultimately win Mumia's freedom in bringing him home!

6 Feb - Climate 'Hero' Gets Three-Year Prison Sentence for Shutting Down Tar Sands Pipeline

Climate activist Michael Foster, was sentenced to serve at least a year in prison for temporarily shutting down the Keystone pipeline in October 2016.

MORE:

by Jessica Corbett (*Common Dreams*)

Michael Foster, the valve turner who temporarily halted the flow of tar sands oil in TransCanada's Keystone pipeline in October 2016, called for future actions to address the global climate crisis before he headed to prison, where he is expected to serve at least a year of his three-year sentence.

"It doesn't matter if I'm sitting in jail. What matters is stopping the pollution," Foster, a 53-year-old mental health counselor from Seattle, declared after his sentencing in North Dakota on Tuesday.

"If other people don't take action, mine makes no difference," he continued. "And if they don't, the planet comes apart at the seams. The only way what I did matters is if people are stopping the poison."

Although others who participated in the multi-state #ShutItDown action two years ago have been allowed to present a "necessity defense"—or argue they believed their act was "necessary to avoid or minimize a harm" that was "greater than the harm resulting from the violation of the law"—Judge Laurie A. Fontaine rejected such a defense for Foster and Sam Jessup, who filmed Foster's action and received a two-year deferred prison sentence with supervised probation.

Outside the court, Dr. James Hansen—who has been called "the father of modern climate change awareness" and was barred from testifying during the trial last year—said the public is generally unaware of the need to urgently address the climate crisis, emphasizing that we are entering "the age of consequences" for burning fossil fuels. "Michael Foster isn't a criminal," Hansen added, "he's a hero."

The decision to sentence Foster to prison time was decried by other climate activists, including fellow valve turner Emily Johnston, who pointed out the lack of legal consequences for environmental degradation caused by the fossil fuel industry.

"TransCanada and the State of North Dakota had both pushed for a harsh sentence to deter other climate activists (the prosecution recommended five years)," according to a statement released Tuesday by Climate Direct Action, which launched the #ShutItDown action. Foster faced a maximum penalty of 21 years in prison, but is expected to only serve one year and then to be released on probation.

"I made a decision to commit civil disobedience to defend my family tree and yours, knowing that there is no government, no politician, no corporation on planet right now putting forward a plan to defend life as we know it," Foster also said Tuesday. "My kids and yours won't survive this mess if we don't clean up all this."

6 Feb - Mutulu Shakur New Year Letter and April 2018 Parole Hearing

The following is an update from Dr. Mutulu Shakur and information about his upcoming parole hearing.

MORE:

Firstly, I would like to ask for your forgiveness for such a long delay in responding to your letters of support, encouragement, seasons greetings and most importantly your individual requests. My delay is not indicative of disregard in any way— rather this last period, which has special implications in the Trump Era, calls for response and flexibility concerning various time tables. We are pleased to see that you, many others, and many nations in the world have been responding to disengagement of democracy and instigation of cultural division, as well as assessing of the impact on the financially divided.

Some of you have used your political capital to try to improve and maintain some sort of healthcare predictability against all odds. At this point, it seems the struggle should remain vigilant. To this point, I was shocked and disappointed to hear that the acupuncture availability, as spread by our barefoot doctors, the second, and third generation of Lincoln Detox, and BAANA (Black Acupuncture Association of North America) has been reduced within municipal hospitals for the treatment of drug addiction. This will adversely impact a large population that may not be able to access the open clinics that we provide as opposed to the general costly boutique clinics.

I must also mention that I was humbled to receive the 2017 Black Power Award honoring me for such pioneering work related to acupuncture for drug withdrawal, general healing treatment, and accessibility in underserved communities. The reality dictates that the history and struggle be memorialized comprehensively, so I have been engrossed in trying to do such. Handling the research from behind these walls is a challenge— talk about time consuming!!— especially with other demands such as recruiting for the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). The acknowledgement of the fact of the deprived and forgotten provides an opportunity to insert a conflict resolution process, aim at remedies for the possibilities that would lessen the loss of many innocent victims on both sides of the past violent conflict.

The TRC is a vision I wish existed when I was drafted during my initial enlistment in the conflict of the 60s, up until my indictment. Truly the pain is overdue for healing, and the initial process consists of enlisting those of all walks of life within our "Diaspora." This pursuit has left me little time to write poems, write a good song, and frankly there are times I believe I've lost the desire for romance =), though I sincerely hope that's not true. In all candor, we can see the truth of the quote, "In the long run, we hit only what we aim at...aim high." (David Thoreau).

Even though I was not directly involved in the A&E documentary special concerning my son, it continues to hearten me that there is enough public interest and concern related to my sons' legacy that a five part series can hold the attention of a broad audience. I'm hoping all the positive that Tupac has done will be kept in proper perspective, for he surely reminds us of what a possibility can be. Afeni fought a tremendous struggle to define and maintain his legacy, to hold onto "some" of his resource against all odds.

This project demonstrates that two contradictions can exist at the same time, and that multiple interests can work together for the same objective, toward different ends, completely unaware of one another and have plausible deniability. It is not in pursuit of revenge, but in the protection of the lessons learned that we search for the "TRUTH." The truth is out there.

The transition of an extraordinary poet, George Edward Tait, was a tremendous loss. He forged a path through our souls with his art, and was founder of my support community "Friends and Family." Tait fought royally and courageously for the gift of present life. He reminded us that the afterlife was just as powerful— this was his belief. He will always be in my heart, and we thank him for ALL that he has done throughout my incarceration.

We are so proud of the Black Women of Alabama for the way they used their political capital in electing Douglas Jones over Roy Moore. It's a clear example to be followed nationally, as each state has its own priorities, and the process can be effected by the power and organization of Black Women. We honor them! It's a fitting remembrance of the four young innocent black girls, killed by the Klan in the church bombing in Alabama in 1964.

As for your individual requests, concerns, and inquiries. I would ask you to visit my website (mutulushakur.com) to see if any of the answers you seek are there. No documents are a complete thought, so I'm sure you may need an explanation. Please use those documents for the basis of your inquiries, so that I can be specific to your request, concerns, and questions as we usher in this new year.

Please keep in mind, I have a parole hearing scheduled in April 2018, we are all aware of the time that goes into preparing for such a hearing, and I will be more than likely requesting some form of support to re-enforce my re-entry to our community. I would like to thank all the supports who have supported me over the years and have been steady in the support for my basic survival.

Again, I apologize for the delay. I hope you stay in touch, and engage, and know that I truly appreciate all that everyone has done for me and others in the struggle for freedom. Particular in this era of institutional contradiction, and moral decay, no one agrees as to what is normal, but we all understand suffering, and oppression, it has no ideological tag.

I have nothing but Love for my Family who have suffered many losses, with dignity. I apologize for any undo burden I have caused, but they know that the Shakur's path has been written, that we honor the suffering, and try to have an impact for the better of us all at a great cost. I love them all, and support all that support them. Remember the LOVE, PASSION, and SACRIFICES. Remember the Shakurs and ALL the innocent victims of both sides of this conflict.

The pathway to Equality, Empowerment and Justice ought not need violence. Peace must be invested with an apparatus and a process. My search has directed me to the TRC, which has proven to allow for possibility of peace when interjected with a process in the midst of violent conflict and post violent conflict. With the reality of the existence of many innocent victims, I believe and demand we preempt violent conflict with a TRC process to forward Peace and Reconciliation. The objective of the Commission is to bear witness to, record, and in some cases, grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes and human rights violations, as well as foster reparation and rehabilitation. The TRC can not be a cure all, but it can expose the painful truth and, in doing so, lead the people from trauma and polarization to a greater collective understanding of the suffering they passed through. Such examples are the religious troubles of Northern Ireland, the tribal genocide in Rwanda, and the racial apartheid in South Africa. Who can deny the need for intervention in Myanmar for the Ruingya people? I'm pained, and my soul is scarred, by the harm caused by my actions in the conflict. We must search for a better way; ALL sides must address their own responsibility to the conflict, reconciliation, and resolution. It is said, "Once you know better, you do better."

We should not let hate or vengeance distract our vigilance to secure our human rights. Let us honor the legacy of Erica Garner who also passed all too soon in 2017.

7 Feb - Despite Cuomo Action, Thousands of Prisoners Still Denied Access to Books

At nine "TV facilities," inmates have traded books for screens — and there's no going back.

MORE:

by Rebecca McCray (*Village Voice*)

Each month, Daniel McGowan spends hours in a dusty Red Hook cellar selecting books from a curious library organized in milk crates. He wraps the books carefully in craft paper and discarded brown bags before sending them to people in prisons across the country. The recipients have mailed in title or genre requests to Books Through Bars, a volunteer-run collective that does its best to meet them.

For McGowan, a New York native and self-described bibliophile, the volunteer work is personal. Before his release in 2012, McGowan spent seven years in federal prison on terrorism charges for his role in fires set by environmental activists at two Oregon lumber companies. His sentence was served in New York, Minnesota, and Indiana, and to pass much of that time, McGowan turned to books.

“Reading was a huge part of my incarceration,” he says. But his access to literature through packages mailed by family, friends, and community members, and through books he was able to purchase with money he had set aside, was somewhat atypical among most of the people he was locked up with.

“Most people didn’t have excess money” for books, McGowan says. “They were fighting their cases or were the primary breadwinners of their family.”

That economic reality was reflected in the recent controversy over a new pilot policy introduced by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision that would severely limit prisoners’ access to books. The rule would have required all prisoners and their family members to send packages only through six approved vendors, which offer limited selection; organizations like Books Through Bars, and any prisoner who couldn’t afford to buy their own books, would be out of luck. Following an onslaught of pushback from New Yorkers concerned that the policy would effectively ban most books, Governor Andrew Cuomo temporarily halted the directive, earning accolades from advocates and the media alike.

It was a well-timed move for Cuomo, who is attempting to cast a more progressive light on his centrist political record, possibly in preparation for an eventual presidential run. But the praise overlooks something sinister: A bizarre policy similar to the one Cuomo shot down still effectively bans free books, and has done so for years, in some cases decades, for up to 13,000 inmates in at least nine state prisons.

These prisons are called “TV facilities.” At some point in the past, prisoners at each of them were instructed by state correction officials to vote by secret ballot on the option to buy personal TVs for their cells. If the vote passed, the TVs then had to be purchased from the prison commissary or an approved vendor, at a cost of more than \$100 apiece.

The TVs come with an additional cost: In exchange for the “right” to buy a TV, prisoners are allowed to receive only two personal packages per year, which cannot contain anything besides food. Any other packages have to be purchased by inmates with their own money, if they have any, from approved vendors. In other words, definitely no free books. And the vote is treated as irreversible, meaning if you get locked up tomorrow, your access to free books could be obstructed by a decades-old decision you had no part in.

At the time of this article’s publication, DOCCS official Patrick Bailey could not confirm when the policy was introduced or in which facility, though a lawsuit filed last year says it dates back to the mid-1980s.

The TV policy is applied haphazardly, making it difficult for family members and organizations to know where they can and can’t send packages. Elmira Correctional Facility, for example, is on the official DOCCS TV facility list, but McGowan has successfully sent books there. Other prisons, including non-TV facilities, seem to reject and accept books at random, according to public defender Ben Schatz, who runs a separate, newer book program for state prisoners out of the Center for Appellate Litigation in Manhattan.

“Half the time if you call these facilities to ask about packages, they say they have no idea, ‘just try and send it,’ ” says Schatz. “There’s no question that the TV facility [policy] is just some bizarre, sui generis thing that somebody made up.”

The goal of both the TV policy and the pilot program rescinded by Cuomo, according to DOCCS spokesperson Thomas Mailey, is to make facilities “safer for inmates and staff,” as he says they face “growing issues with drugs and weapons” entering prisons by mail. Last week, DOCCS announced that the number of incidents involving contraband had more than doubled over the last decade. The union representing correction officers has repeatedly called for stricter measures to prevent contraband from entering prisons, and criticized Cuomo’s choice to halt the pilot book-restriction program last month.

Yet correction officers themselves are often conduits for contraband. As recently as November, a DOCCS correction officer at a prison in the Oneida County town of Marcy was arrested for trying to smuggle in drugs.

Correction officials also argue that access to books is scarcely hindered by these policies, because most prisoners can access both a prison library and an inter-library loan system. But both of those options tend to fall short in practice. The inter-library loan system relies on local libraries, which may also lack a wide selection of books. McGowan says when he used the inter-library loan system while incarcerated, roughly one out of every six book requests would be granted.

“Prisons are in rural areas that skew heavily white and heavily conservative, so the population of books you actually have are really homogenous,” adds McGowan.

Access to free literature and educational materials in prison provides more than just a way for inmates to pass the time. Reading and educational programs have been shown to reduce recidivism, the rate at which people return to corrections custody after being released. Understandably, that’s a concern of both DOCCS and Cuomo, given the human and fiscal costs of incarceration: The most recent DOCCS recidivism data, from 2014, shows 42 percent of prisoners released in 2011 were returned to state custody within three years of their release. (The majority of those returns were due to parole violations, rather than new felony offenses.) Last week, DOCCS announced it would begin providing free electronic tablets to state prisoners containing some educational materials and e-books. But the vast majority of e-books, music, and email services on those tablets will still come at a cost to the prisoners.

The existence of TV facilities remains largely unpublicized, even to those in the criminal justice reform sphere. DOCCS officials themselves seem unsure of its inner workings: While both Mailey and fellow DOCCS spokesperson Patrick Bailey emphasized more than once to the Voice that “the inmates vote on this,” when pressed on the details of the voting procedure and its irreversible outcome, Bailey acknowledged that he didn’t actually know how often the secret ballot process takes place, but confirmed it definitely doesn’t happen annually.

(At the time of publication, Cuomo’s office had not replied to multiple requests for comment on the TV facility policy.)

At least for now, prisoners in non-TV facilities can still receive packages from people like McGowan and Schatz. But the barred pilot policy is likely to return after the dust settles. A coalition of legal service and community-based organizations are already pushing back against what they see as its inevitable return.

Cuomo has tried to position himself as a proponent of criminal justice reform, particularly in his call for changes in the system of cash bail, which he noted disproportionately impacts low-income New Yorkers and people of color. He went on to opine in the Times about his vision for “a more just New York State,” the need to protect due process for the poor, and his support for reform of the state’s controversial discovery law, which currently favors prosecutors over defendants.

Yet Cuomo also kicked off 2017 by vetoing two criminal justice reform bills, one of which would have helped New Yorkers — particularly low-income people of color — avoid needless contact with the criminal justice system by reforming the state’s “gravity knife” ban, while the other would have afforded better legal representation to those ensnared in it.

In 2015, Cuomo took a trip upstate for a heavily documented tour of one of the nine TV prisons, Clinton Correctional Facility, to trace the escape route of prisoners David Sweat and Richard Matt from the state’s largest maximum-security facility. The excursion made for a great photo op: The governor peered into manholes with a furrowed brow; shimmied up a dusty, dimly lit ladder; and shined a flashlight into an escape hole. Video of the tour captures Cuomo peering between the bars of the cell next to that of the escapee who had used power tools to bore an opening in the wall under his bed, glibly musing to its occupant that the getaway “must’ve kept you awake with all that cuttin’, huh?”

Perhaps if the governor had paused a bit longer, or asked questions of the prisoner next door that weren’t thinly veiled accusations, he would have learned that the nearly 3,000 people incarcerated at Clinton are subject to a byzantine policy that limits their access to books. One of those Clinton prisoners, Jeremy Zielinski, was so troubled by the restrictions the rule placed on his access to reading material that he filed a lawsuit challenging its constitutionality last year. The case is now pending before a federal judge.

Cuomo’s call to rescind the new package policy is a temporary win for some prisoners, but not for the 13,000 people locked up in places like Clinton. And in failing to address DOCCS’ TV prisons policy, Cuomo is missing an obvious opportunity to provide educational resources proven to reduce recidivism to a population that is largely indigent — at virtually no cost to his state’s precious budget.

9 Feb - Joseph Buddenberg released from prison!

On February 7, Joseph Buddenberg was released from prison!

MORE:

Thank you so much to everyone who has supported him through his sentence, and who’s there for him as he begins two years of probation. Please continue to watch for updates and to support Nicole and she completes the final months of her prison sentence.

9 Feb - California police worked with neo-Nazis to pursue 'anti-racist' activists, documents show

Officers expressed sympathy with white supremacists and sought their help to target counter-protesters after a violent 2016 rally, according to court documents.

MORE:

by Sam Levin (*The Guardian*)

California police investigating a violent white nationalist event worked with white supremacists in an effort to identify counter-protesters and sought the prosecution of activists with “anti-racist” beliefs, court documents show.

The records, which also showed officers expressing sympathy with white supremacists and trying to protect a neo-Nazi organizer's identity, were included in a court briefing from three anti-fascist activists who were charged with felonies after protesting at a Sacramento rally. The defendants were urging a judge to dismiss their case and accused California police and prosecutors of a "cover-up and collusion with the fascists".

Defense lawyers said the case at the state capital offers the latest example of US law enforcement appearing to align with neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups while targeting anti-fascist activists and Donald Trump protesters after violent clashes.

"It is shocking and really angering to see the level of collusion and the amount to which the police covered up for the Nazis," said Yvette Felarca, a Berkeley teacher and anti-fascist organizer charged with assault and rioting after participating in the June 2016 Sacramento rally, where she said she was stabbed and bludgeoned in the head. "The people who were victimized by the Nazis were then victimized by the police and the district attorneys."

Steve Grippi, chief deputy district attorney prosecuting the case in Sacramento, vehemently denied the claims of bias in an email to the Guardian, alleging that anti-fascist stabbing victims have been uncooperative and noting that his office has filed charges against one member of the Traditionalist Workers Party (TWP), the neo-Nazi group that organized the rally.

Some California highway patrol (CHP) investigation records, however, raise questions about the police's investigative tactics and communication with the TWP.

Felarca's attorneys obtained numerous examples of CHP officers working directly with the TWP, often treating the white nationalist group as victims and the anti-fascists as suspects.

The TWP is "intimately allied with neo-Nazi and other hardline racist organizations" and "advocates for racially pure nations", according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Its leaders have praised Trump, and the group claimed to bring more than 100 people to the Charlottesville white supremacist rally, where a counter-protester was killed.

In one phone call with Doug McCormack, identified by police as the TWP affiliate who acquired the permit for the Sacramento rally, CHP investigator Donovan Ayres warned him that police might have to release his name in response to a public records requests. The officer said he would try to protect McCormack.

"I'm gonna suggest that we hold that or redact your name or something until this gets resolved," Ayres told McCormack, adding that he didn't know who had requested records of the permit and noting, "If I did, I would tell you."

Ayres's reports noted that McCormack was armed at the rally with a knife.

The officer's write-up about an African American anti-fascist activist included a photo of him at the hospital after the rally and noted that he had been stabbed in the abdomen, chest and hand.

Ayres, however, treated the protester like a suspect in the investigation. The police investigator recommended the man be charged with 11 offenses, including disturbing the peace, conspiracy, assault, unlawful assembly and wearing a mask to evade police.

As evidence, Ayres provided Facebook photos of the man holding up his fist. The officer wrote that the man's "Black Power salute" and his "support for anti-racist activism" demonstrated his "intent and motivation to violate the civil rights" of the neo-Nazi group. He was ultimately not charged.

Ayres's report also noted Felarca's political activism in great detail, referencing her activism on behalf of students of color and women's rights protests.

"This is a textbook case of a political witch-hunt and selective prosecution," Shanta Driver, one of Felarca's attorneys, said in an interview.

Officers also worked with TWP member Derik Punneo to try to identify anti-fascist activists, recordings revealed. Officers interviewed Punneo in jail after he was arrested for an unrelated domestic violence charge. Audio recordings captured investigators saying they brought photos to show him, hoping he could help them identify anti-fascist activists.

The officers said, "We're pretty much going after them," and assured him: "We're looking at you as a victim."

Ayres's report noted that Punneo was armed with a knife at the neo-Nazi rally and that one stabbing victim told officers he believed Punneo was responsible. Using video footage, Ayres also noted that Punneo was "in the vicinity" of another victim at the time he was injured, but the officer said the evidence ultimately wasn't clear.

Punneo and McCormack, who could not be reached for comment, were not charged. Ayres's report included images and names of three other TWP-affiliated men who he said were armed with knives, but who also have faced no charges.

The CHP declined to comment.

In a response filed on Thursday, prosecutors said "every assertion" in the motion to dismiss is "inaccurate or fabricated" and accused Felarca's lawyers of using the filing to "make a political statement". The response also repeatedly blamed the stabbing victims for ignoring the district attorney's inquiries: "Despite the fact that we have not gained the cooperation of these victims, the investigation to hold their attackers responsible continues forward."

Prosecutors also said the charges were based on video evidence and argued that "no one is beneath the protection of the law, no matter how repugnant his or her rhetoric or misguided his or her ideals".

Allegations of police bias and collusion with neo-Nazis have emerged in similar cases across the US. Last year, US prosecutors targeting anti-Trump protesters in Washington DC relied on video evidence from a far-right group with a record of deceptive tactics.

At an Oregon "alt-right" event, police allowed a member of a rightwing militia-style group to help officers arrest an anti-fascist activist.

Police in Charlottesville were widely accused of standing by as Nazis attacked protesters, and a black man who was badly beaten by white supremacists was later charged with a felony.

Sam Menefee-Libey, an activist who advocated for protesters charged for Inauguration Day rallies last year, said the government has repeatedly gone to great lengths to target anti-fascists: "We have patterns of

acknowledged and unacknowledged overlaps between the interest of ultra-right nationalist organizations and the police and prosecutors' offices.”

11 Feb - Eddie Africa Denied Parole

Earlier this week Eddie Africa found out that he was denied parole once again by the Pennsylvania Parole Board.

MORE:

Eddie again was given a one year hit and for some reason the Pennsylvania Parole Board has brought back the issue of failure to show remorse for the crime committed and the nature of the crime. At this point the issue of The Move 9 and their innocence doesn't have to be argued because the Parole Board knows our family is innocent and they are under strict orders of the Fraternal Order of Police and police unions across the country to keep The Move 9 in prison.

Police across the country have stained cities with the blood of Blacks, Latinos, and poor whites—all victims to police and their murderous wild west mentality. On May 13th 1985 for the world to see this government dropped a bomb on the home of the MOVE Organization murdering 11 people—6 Adults and 5 children. Eric Garner was choked and killed on camera by police, Sandra Bland was arrested by police then murdered in her jail cell by police. These examples are pointed out to people to simply show that the police are the threat to the safety of the community as they have always been and not MOVE members.

In a nine month span, three MOVE members have been denied parole: Delbert Africa in June 2017, Michael Africa in January 2018, and now Eddie Africa in February 2018. This upcoming May Janet, Janine, and Debbie Africa will be appearing before the Parole Board, who in fact has the same plans to deny parole for our sisters as they have done with our brothers. The work in turning back the illegal practices of the Parole Board continues and we are not backing off of this issue one bit! The Move 9 are now 10 Years past their eligibility for parole. Robert Seth Hayes is now 20 years past his parole eligibility.

This is a serious problem that we are addressing and are continuing to fight every step of the way.

16 Feb - I Am Not Your Negro

WHAT: Film Screening

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, February 16th

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

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement - NYC for a screening of I Am Not Your Negro, which envisions the book James Baldwin never finished, a radical narration about race in America, using the writer's original words, as read by actor Samuel L. Jackson. Alongside a flood of rich archival material, the film draws upon Baldwin's notes on the lives and assassinations of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. to explore and bring a fresh and radical perspective to the current racial narrative in America.

18 Feb - Letter-writing to Queer Prisoners

WHAT: Letter-writing

WHEN: 2:00-4:00pm, Sunday, February 18th

WHERE: Bluestockings - 172 Allen Street, New York, New York

COST: FREE

MORE:

NYC Black & Pink & the Queer Detainee Empowerment Project would like to invite you to our afternoon letter writing. What can you bring? Writing materials, stamps if you want! We can always use more postage. Help us in alleviating the isolation of prison!

18 Feb - MACC YouTube Party

WHAT: Training

WHEN: 1:00-3:00pm, Sunday, February 18th

WHERE: Mayday Space (2nd floor, Main Classroom)–176 St Nicholas Avenue, Brooklyn

COST: Free/\$5 suggested donation to cover the space.

MORE:

Join Metro Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) for an afternoon dedicated to researching fascist and white supremacist content on YouTube to target it for removal! It can be emotionally taxing and disturbing to watch this content - so we hope doing it together makes this important work a bit easier to endure.

- Participants should bring a laptop if they can.
- Pizza will be provided!
- Snacks for yourself or to share are also welcome.

24 Feb - Training: Media Strategy

WHAT: Training

WHEN: 2:00-4:00pm, Saturday, February 24th

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

COST: FREE

MORE:

We all know the mainstream media is not to be trusted. However, sometimes, to get our message across and to outreach to new people, we need to communicate with them. This training will cover responding to press inquiries, develop relationships with reporters, do interviews, and media strategy.

This will all help you build your communications skills, and join the MACC press working group.

24 Feb - Framed In America: The Making Of Political Prisoners

WHAT: Public Parole Rally

WHEN: 4:00pm, Saturday, February 24th

WHERE: The National Black Theater - 2031 Fifth Avenue Harlem, New York

COST: Free, dinner will be available for sale

MORE:

Join Ramona Africa, Fred Hampton Jr., Pam Africa, Roger Wareham, Betty Davis, Ralph Poynter, Johanna Fernandez, and more as they rally for parole for MOVE political prisoners in 2018. Endorsed by NYC Anarchist Black Cross.

25 Feb - Anarchists Care About Books: All About Love

WHAT: Book discussion

WHEN: 4:00-6:00pm, Sunday, February 25th

WHERE: Bluestockings - 172 Allen Street, New York, New York

COST: Free

MORE:

Come to discuss All About Love by bell hooks.

25 Feb - Mutual Aid Self Therapy Open House

WHAT: Open House

WHEN: 7:00pm, Sunday, February 25th

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

COST: Free

MORE:

Join us for this opportunity to learn about Mutual Aid Self Therapy (MAST) and get involved in the next session. Come for conversation and dinner.