



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for December 1st

17 Nov - Kings Bay Plowshares Activists Pay Heavy Price For Resisting Nukes

As we wait for the sentencing of the remaining Kings Bay Plowshares 7, more articles are being written about them. We've included a roundup of some of them below.

MORE:

by Jonathan Michels (*Shadowproof*)

Patrick O'Neill gripped the hammer tightly in his hands. The police would soon surround him.

O'Neill and six other Catholic peace activists had infiltrated the Kings Bay Naval Base in St. Mary's, Georgia, with the goal of symbolically disarming the base's six Trident submarines armed with first-strike missiles capable of holding 200 nuclear warheads.

Some of the activists strung up crime scene tape and hung protest banners that read "The Ultimate Logic of Trident is Omnicide." Others poured baby bottles of their own blood around the base.

Using Google Maps, O'Neill and Mark Colville discovered a macabre shrine to nuclearism consisting of a half dozen statues of nuclear missiles that looked as if they were suspended in motion just seconds after launch.

Staring up at a replica of a Trident D5 intercontinental ballistic missile, O'Neill's mind turned to the book of Exodus in the Bible: the shrine offered proof that nuclear weapons were modern-day idols more powerful than a golden calf. Unlike that empty signifier, the pacifist recognized the immutable power of nuclear weapons. For him, it was the same as worshipping death.

Time was running short. O'Neill sprinted up to the statue and beat it with the hammer. The missile was solid cement and the hammerhead broke clean off.

"It was a formidable idol," recalled O'Neill.

Catholic peace activists like the ones who infiltrated the naval base at Kings Bay in 2018 have attempted to topple the formidable idol of nuclearism for 40 years, and they have paid a heavy price.

Liz McAlister has already served 17 months behind bars and Father Steve Kelley continues to languish in a jail in Georgia. After spending more than 28 months under house arrest, O'Neill was slapped with a 14-month prison sentence in October. Carmen Trotta and Clare Grady will serve more than a year in prison, while Martha Hennessy expects to be incarcerated for 10 months. Mark Colville will be sentenced in December.

On top of that, the activists are grappling with an establishment media blackout that they fear could be reflective of Americans' apathy towards nuclear abolition at a moment when the threat of a nuclear holocaust is at its highest point in decades.

Beating Swords Into Plowshares

O'Neill and the other Catholic peace activists knew they possessed neither the tools nor the numbers to physically disarm the nuclear naval base at Kings Bay. Rather, the goal of the Kings Bay action, like every

Plowshares action dating back to the movement's inception, was to call attention to the omnicidal threat that nuclear weapons continue to pose for humanity.

The Plowshares movement began in 1980 when Roman Catholic priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan and six others surreptitiously gained access to the Re-Entry Division at the General Electric Space Technology Center in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Carrying only hammers and pints of their own blood to symbolize the human cost of nuclear war, the activists pounded on nose cones that covered Mark 12A nuclear warheads and poured the blood over engineering blueprints and other documents.

As their objective was to convert weapons of war into instruments of peace, the activists dubbed themselves the Plowshares Eight, a reference to a verse in the book of Isaiah in the Bible calling nations to "beat swords into plowshares."

The King of Prussia action captured the attention of the nation—the *New York Times* to call it "one of the best-known antiwar incidents in this country since the Vietnam War"—and announced to the world the beginning of a bold new faction within the broader anti-war movement in the U.S. that fused religion with non-violent direct action against nuclear weapons.

"They were different. They were risky. They were costly," said McAlister, a former Catholic nun and longtime Plowshares activist.

Since 1980, dozens of Plowshares activists have repeatedly penetrated sites across the country ranging from military installations to missile silos and in the process laid waste to the idea that nuclear weapons could ever be stored safely. The 2018 infiltration of the naval base at Kings Bay is estimated to be the 100th Plowshares action.

Legal trials and prison sentences that were sure to follow their acts of civil disobedience were viewed as opportunities for the activists to draw more attention to their cause and often revealed the extraordinary lengths the government took to suppress dissent among those who dared to confront the American war machine.

"You could count on serious time as a consequence," McAlister said. "And [the federal government was] consistent about seeing to it that we did that time."

McAlister and Philip Berrigan were excommunicated from the Catholic church after they married in 1973 but their social justice activism continued. McAlister said she avoided participating in Plowshares actions at the same time as her husband so that one parent could be home with their children.

The couple estimated that they spent more than 10 years of their marriage separated by the carceral system. McAlister served another two and a half years, including jail time for the Kings Bay action, since Berrigan died in 2002.

When Grady first heard about the King of Prussia action, her initial reaction was alarm at the personal risks that the activists undertook to broadcast their message out to the public. Her second reaction was skepticism that their actions, though brave, would lead to any concessions on the part of the American military-industrial complex.

After some consideration, Grady realized, "Oh, our friends are not asking the U.S. government to do anything. They're doing it themselves."

Two years later, Grady joined McAlister and five others in penetrating the Griffiss Air Force Base in New York in order to gain access to a B-52 bomber, which were once outfitted to carry nuclear payloads that could be dropped onto the former Soviet Union. Base security did not appear until an hour after the activists started beating on the hanger doors, which incidentally were unlocked.

“In 1983, when we hammered on the B-52 bomber and related parts, that plane was actually frozen for evidence for five months,” Grady said. “That is one of the few moments where nuclear weapons with these actions actually were disarmed. I’m not sure that too many efforts could claim that at that moment.”

The grassroots movement against nuclear weapons in the U.S. reached a peak in 1982 when an estimated one million people converged in New York City for a massive demonstration. Grady remembered the thrill of being a part of the historic protest, which stands in stark contrast to the minority status that anti-nuclearism maintains today.

“People were very much aware at that time of the danger of nuclear weapons,” Grady said. “Nowadays, very few people know about it and very few people are organizing around it.”

The dearth of activism against nuclear weapons in the U.S. coincides with a new nuclear arms race as measures designed to mitigate nuclear proliferation that took decades to stitch together are being dismantled piece-by-piece.

The New Nuclear Arms Race

The world is currently just 100 seconds away from global destruction, according to the Doomsday Clock created by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in 1947 as a way to remind people about the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Here in the U.S., a new nuclear threat, one potentially more cataclysmic than the first, is currently underway. And not unlike the nuclear submarines that pass innocuously through the waters of Kings Bay in Georgia, it is happening right under the noses of the American public.

“What has happened is the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of a single focused enemy with a peer competitor in the nuclear field,” Jessica T. Matthews told *Shadowproof*. Matthews is the former president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

“Older people remember getting under their desks for nuclear drills when they were in elementary school and putting their coats over their heads. Growing up in the era of above-ground nuclear testing all the time. All that went away with the end of the Cold War and I think it seemed as though the threat of nuclear conflict went with it.”

The United States ushered in the nuclear age in 1945 and despite deepening wealth inequality and skyrocketing unemployment resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, the country continues to spend billions of dollars to maintain its nuclear hegemony over the rest of the world. This new nuclear arms race is a reminder of how even in an era marked by entrenched partisan divisiveness, Democratic and Republican lawmakers remain united on maintaining America’s nuclear supremacy regardless of the financial, environmental or human costs.

In 2001, Republican President George W. Bush withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, an arms control agreement dating back to the 1970s. President Obama, a Democrat, secured passage of the New START treaty limiting the number of nuclear weapons but only after he struck a deal with Congress to spend \$100 billion to refit American nuclear facilities and labs. That plan has now turned into an across-the-board modernization of the country’s nuclear apparatus, including the Trident II D5 nuclear missiles that are housed at the Kings Bay naval base, currently priced at \$1.7 trillion, Matthews said.

More than any other president, Trump seemed bent on turning the clock back to the 1950s when the country maintained more than 30,000 nuclear warheads and bombs in its stockpile, compared to roughly 5,800 weapons today. In May, Trump administration officials signalled their interest in breaking the 28-

year moratorium on nuclear testing to get China and Russia to agree to arms limitations under the New START treaty, which expires in 2021.

President-elect Joe Biden will likely extend the treaty but the result of all these infractions upon our already threadbare nuclear safety net amount to a running leap into a second nuclear arms race that is expected to continue regardless of who sits in the White House.

“It’s a train that’s in motion and it’s going to be very hard to slow it down or redirect it,” Matthews warned.

So hard that barring any unforeseen conflicts that might actually bring us closer to the brink of nuclear war, Matthews is dubious that Plowshares actions and other grassroots organizing will be enough on their own to force the issue into the national discourse.

“I think it’s a really hard time for that to happen,” Matthews said. “If there were a confluence of events...if the [Trump] administration decided to test [nuclear weapons] and then if Korea got hot, and if several things happened at once, I can imagine it. But I just don’t think this is an issue whose time has come for public attention.”

A Nuclear Media Blackout

Calls to drop the charges against members of the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven elicited support from figures like Daniel Ellsberg, whistleblower and longtime anti-nuclear activist, along with religious leaders, including Reverend William J. Barber of the revived Poor People’s Campaign and former archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Though he has not publicly commented on the legal fate of the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven, Pope Francis has embraced the Catholic peace activists’ once radical demand for the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

“There is an urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons,” Pope Francis told the United Nations in 2015, “in full application of the non-proliferation treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.”

Media coverage, meanwhile, has failed to keep pace. News about the Catholic pacifists’ bold act of nonviolent civil disobedience at Kings Bay and their subsequent trial appears predominantly in progressive or religious publications like the National Catholic Reporter. Mainstream outlets, including those in Atlanta and nearby Jacksonville, Florida, have steered clear of the Plowshares activists.

The lack of coverage has prompted some Plowshares supporters to conclude the seven activists have become the victims of a media blackout.

Journalist Jeremy Scahill recently gave voice to that concern following the recent sentencing of Kelley and O’Neill. Speaking in October on *Democracy Now!*, Scahill slammed the press’ refusal to cover the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven.

“These Catholic peace activists, during the Trump administration, tried to confront that nuclear threat, and there was a total media blackout on the action that they did,” Scahill said. “And, you know, if we lived in a just society, the Kings Bay Plowshares activists’ trial would have been reported on as one of the most brave confrontations of the most dangerous aspect of this government, and particularly this administration.”

O’Neill pointed to a 2019 hearing for the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven attended by the actor and Catholic activist Martin Sheen. Only one reporter from a local newspaper showed up to document Sheen’s public show of support.

Rather than a concerted effort by the media to suppress the activists, O'Neill fears that the lack of press coverage is instead a reflection of how complacent Americans have become after 75 years of living on hair-trigger alert. In the absence of sustained grassroots mobilization aimed at keeping the issue of nuclear abolition in the spotlight, O'Neill imagines news editors and journalists view the Plowshares activists as if they are political outliers or relics of a bygone era, with little incentive to cover them.

"The media is not blacking us out," said O'Neill. "They just made a conscious decision to say we're not worthy of coverage. It just says something about how relaxed people are about being under the shadow of the nuclear arms race."

'It's Our Obligation To Speak Out'

The deadly coronavirus pandemic compounds what is sure to be an already arduous prison sentence, posing an additional threat for members of the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven, all of whom are more susceptible to COVID-19 since they are over the age of 60.

In October, United States District Court Judge Lisa Godbey Wood sentenced O'Neill to 14 months in prison. Since he lives at a Catholic worker house in Garner, North Carolina, O'Neill told *Shadowproof* that he preferred to serve out his sentence close to home at the nearby federal prison in Butner even though it has become a hotspot for coronavirus infections. More people at Butner have died from COVID-19—26 prisoners and one staff member—than at any other federal federal correctional institution.

Instead, O'Neill was ordered to report to the Elkton Federal Prison in Ohio. The facility was at the center of a COVID-19 outbreak that was so bad with one in four prisoners infected that it drew legal action from the ACLU. So far, nine prisoners have died from the coronavirus. O'Neill said he is appealing the order but clearly both options pose a risk to his health.

When asked about whether the Kings Bay action was worth losing his life over, O'Neill echoed the words of past Plowshares activists who saw a greater danger—in this case, the death of all living things—in not speaking out.

"There are people in the world working to change the direction of the world, to move the world away from nuclearism and the development of more nuclear weapons and we're very much in the minority right now," O'Neill said. "But nonetheless, we're not acting in vain."

"If we hadn't gone to Kings Bay, people living in those communities there would never have given any thought to Kings Bay as being anything more than an employer, an economic boost. I think people now have to sort of think about things in a different light."

It is reasonable to think that at nearly 81 years old, McAlister's 17-month stretch for breaking into the naval submarine base at Kings Bay will be her last time behind bars for nonviolent civil disobedience. But McAlister knows just as well as anyone else that nuclear annihilation is not reasonable and she stopped short at saying definitively whether Kings Bay would be her last Plowshares action.

McAlister acknowledged her concern that fewer people are willing to join the Plowshares movement than they were 40 years ago at the height of anti-nuclearism. But just as the threat of nuclear war has not subsided since the end of the Cold War, McAlister is hopeful that people of conscience will continue to fight for a nuclear-free world.

A former nun, McAlister says she never would have dared to undertake the risks that Plowshares activists must take if it weren't for her faith in God. She firmly believes that it was God performing "minor miracles" that facilitated the entry of dozens of Plowshares activists into highly secured nuclear facilities and enabled them to put their hands directly onto the doomsday machine.

“These are the most deadly weapons in the world,” said McAlister. “How is it possible for somebody like me to walk right in and be right next to them and pour blood on them? Use a hammer on them? But I’ve done it a number of times and so have some of my friends and my husband.”

“And please, God, others will continue to do it,” she said.

One person who answered the call was Martha Hennessy. The 2018 infiltration of the Kings Bay naval base was her first Plowshares action, which makes her an anomaly among the other activists.

Hennessy, though, is no stranger to the movement. In fact, she is the granddaughter of Dorothy Day, who was one of the principal driving forces behind the creation of the Catholic Worker movement in the 1930s. Growing up, Hennessy witnessed firsthand the evolution of the Plowshares movement under the guidance of Catholic peace activists like McAlister and the Berrigan brothers who dared to take a stand against the threat of nuclear armageddon even in the face of assured retribution from the federal government.

Her decision to infiltrate the Kings Bay naval base in a defiant act of civil disobedience against the world’s most powerful military came only after months of prayerful discernment, a kind of internal examination about what risks she was willing to take on behalf of her religious beliefs and moral convictions.

The integrity of the Plowshares movement gave Hennessy the strength to take part in the Kings Bay action, a cohort that she believes will help her survive her 10-month prison sentence.

“You know, walking onto a military base was not the first thing I wanted to do in this resistance work for nuclear abolition,” recalled Hennessy. “But the power of such an act can speak for itself and we had to bring the body of Christ there to the base.”

“It’s our obligation to speak out,” she proclaimed.

November 25th - Free the Plowshares 7!

by Maria Margaronis (*The Nation*)

I first met Martha Hennessy a couple of years ago at a barbecue in Vermont, on one of those summer afternoons where the talk winds on and on as smoke from the grill floats lazily up to the heavens. With her grey ponytail and long loose skirt, she fit right in to our post-back-to-the-land community. Lifting her hem a little, she showed me the plastic electronic tag on her left ankle. She was out on bail, awaiting trial for her part in the Plowshares 7 symbolic disarmament action at the largest nuclear submarine base in the world, Kings Bay in Georgia, on April 4, 2018, the 60th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s assassination.

The Plowshares 7 are Catholic pacifists and antinuclear activists, committed to Isaiah’s command to “beat swords into plowshares,” in the tradition begun by Daniel and Philip Berrigan at the General Electric facility in King of Prussia, Pa., in 1980; there have been about a hundred similar actions since. At Kings Bay, the seven cut through the security fence, poured their own blood on the base’s official seal, hammered on a metal display of a Tomahawk missile, and put up crime scene tape and a banner reading “The ultimate logic of Trident is omnicide” (an adaptation of Dr. King’s “The ultimate logic of racism is genocide”). In October 2019, they were convicted of four federal crimes—conspiracy, destruction of government property, depredation of a naval installation, and trespassing—for which the maximum sentence is 20 years and six months in prison.

Martha and I stayed in touch. She would not want to be singled out from her fellows in this way, but it’s through our conversations that I’ve begun to understand what enables her to keep confronting a threat so overwhelming that most of us ignore it, and to risk her own body to challenge it.

For the Plowshares 7, nuclear weapons are not just a sword of Damocles hanging over humanity. They kill every day, by stealing resources from the poor, reinforcing white supremacy, contaminating the land. Martha speaks about the connection Dr. King drew between racism, materialism, and militarism, pointing

out that it was when he made the link between violence against Black people at home and the war in Vietnam that he became a real danger to the state.

Martha wasn't always a practicing Catholic; she's struggled deeply with what she calls the US Catholic Church's complicity with empire and its attitude to women. Her faith grew out of her opposition to war, and her experience of her grandmother Dorothy Day, the radical activist, mystic, and founder of the Catholic Worker movement. She remembers sitting on Dorothy's lap as a small child, listening to her heartbeat and her voice, and sees that now as her first intimation of God: "It meant connectedness, and love, and warmth...knowing that I was part of this Mystical Body, where God is love and God is within each of us."

At 14, she stood in the kitchen and watched her brother leave for Vietnam; he came back traumatized and damaged by Agent Orange. In her 20s, she was arrested protesting nuclear power in Vermont. Much later, in 2002, she spoke at Dorothy's induction to the National Women's Hall of Fame; afterward, Ruth Bader Ginsburg ran up to her, grabbed her hand, and vanished. That day put her newly in touch with her grandmother's legacy. She began to volunteer at Maryhouse, the Catholic Worker hospitality shelter in Manhattan, and eventually found her way to the Plowshares movement.

When Martha speaks of the Mystical Body, or describes pouring blood on nuclear missiles as a sacrament, something in me stalls. I can relate to those things only as metaphor. But listening to her—not just her words, but the fierce thoughtfulness of her voice—I've come to understand her courage and commitments as indivisible, the expression of a belief in love or, to put it differently, the possibility of goodness, which may not be so different from what she intends.

Something like that seems to have happened to the judge at Martha's sentencing on November 13. Sentencing for the Plowshares 7 was delayed by the pandemic and has been taking place by video link; all the defendants are over 55, and the oldest, Elizabeth McAlister, Philip Berrigan's widow, is now 81. Martha was the sixth to appear, from the room at Maryhouse where Day lived and died. Her lawyer, the judge and the prosecutor were all at separate locations in Brunswick, Ga.

A courtroom, even a virtual one, is a theater where narratives clash. Judge Lisa Wood began with the necessary litany of formalities and addressed the defense's arguments for a reduction in the recommended sentence: 18–24 months in prison and a restitution payment of \$33,503.51. There were paragraph numbers, factor numbers, references to precedent. The prosecutor brought in the sense of a crime with the list of tools used by the Plowshares 7 (though not by Martha herself)—power tools, pry tools, blood, hammers, bolt cutters—and words like "conspiracy" and "under cover of darkness." The judge agreed to reduce the burden of Martha's three previous convictions—all misdemeanors for nonviolent protest—but rejected all other arguments for a "downward departure" in sentencing.

The testimony of Martha's four witnesses changed the atmosphere, as if someone had opened a window and let the outdoors in. Her friend and Vermont neighbor Elizabeth Blum spoke of their shared interest in organic gardening, birding, and textile arts—and her childhood in the 1950s, when she wasn't allowed to drink milk contaminated with strontium 90 from nuclear tests in Nevada. Et in Arcadia ego. George Horton, who's worked for Catholic Charities for 39 years, described meeting Martha at Maryhouse assiduously scrubbing a huge pot; he explained that her work there is about relationship and friendship, not social services, so that she is irreplaceable.

Retired attorney Mary Yelenick helped to draft the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that comes into force on January 22—two days after President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. She made a harrowing statement describing the effects of nuclear weapons on adults and children's bodies, and pointed out that while adherence to the law provides stability, many things we now find abhorrent were once considered legal. Sister Marilyn Gramas, Martha's spiritual director, spoke almost maternally, describing how hard it was for Martha to decide to take part in this action. All respectfully asked for mercy. Martha quietly explained that her faith, social responsibility, and love for humanity compelled her to act as she did;

she spoke of her remorse that we have built the bombs and her regret at having embarrassed the personnel on the base.

The judge listened carefully and, when they had finished, seemed almost reluctant to speak. She sentenced Martha to 10 months in federal prison which, though it could be dangerous for a woman of 65 in these pandemic times, is far less than was expected. It felt almost like victory.

All six of the Plowshares 7 sentenced so far have received new prison terms, except McAlister, who was sentenced to time served. Joe Biden claims to share their faith. It would take but the stroke of a pen to pardon them and show that he also understands its moral implications.

18 Nov - Welcome home, Jeremy Hammond!

After ten long years, many transfers and lost good time and being held in contempt of a federal grand jury, political prisoner Jeremy Hammond has been released to a halfway house in Illinois.

MORE:

His sentence ends in March 2021 and keep an eye out for information on how to support him as he adjusts back to the outside world.

18 Nov - Nobel laureates & interfaith leaders appeal for clemency of long-imprisoned elder David Gilbert

Desmond Tutu and the families of Gandhi and King urgently call on New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo to grant clemency to the 76-year-old activist, imprisoned for nearly four decades.

MORE:

by Ethan Vesely-Flad (*Waging Nonviolence*)

As the world focuses on election results and the growth in Covid-19 infections, the situation behind prison walls remains out of view for most of us. In New York State correctional institutions, however, coronavirus numbers surge at rates which counter the leadership image of Governor Andrew Cuomo, and calls for State mercy for a single incarcerated senior now include numerous Nobel Peace laureates as well as the families of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and dozens of other religious and human rights leaders. The prisoner, 76-year-old David Gilbert who has served 40 years with an exemplary nonviolent record, is one of many elders behind bars who reform groups say should be granted immediate clemency on humanitarian and medical grounds. With the recent Vatican call for an end to the death penalty, many say that Gilbert's continued incarceration in the midst of the pandemic constitutes a change in sentencing, as his life is imperiled despite his remorse and decades of rehabilitation and good works. Cuomo's inaction at this time remains in sharp contrast to his own proclamations about how "a broken and unfair system" can make a bad situation even worse.

The Open Letter (below), coordinated by Fellowship of Reconciliation former chairperson Matt Meyer, is one of many such efforts throughout the U.S. calling for relief for over-age inmates facing fatal consequences in light of multiple health crises, and throughout the world calling for freedom for all political prisoners. "In truth it is revenge and nothing else," Meyer notes, "which keep so many behind bars despite the emergency circumstances we're all facing." Meyer — a global leader in the field of peace studies, and second only to 20th-century "dean" of pacifist and peace movements Rev. A.J. Muste to chair both FOR and the War Resisters League — has been visiting Gilbert for over three decades. "David started off as a nonviolent activist, became deeply committed in the 1960s to solidarity with the Black movement by any means necessary, and continues to demonstrate both remorse and action which would make him the opposite of a danger to the community," Meyer asserts. Aware that the tragic crime for which Gilbert was convicted took place just down the road from FOR's historic then-headquarters in Nyack, Fellowship leaders throughout the interfaith movement have signed onto the call. "As the signers to this initiative spotlight," Meyer concludes: "Gilbert's incarceration is itself an act of cruel and unusual injustice; his freedom would surely benefit anyplace he might choose to live."

For those wishing to support David Gilbert's release, and for more information, contact: questions@friendsofdavidgilbert.org.

Open Letter to the Hon. Governor Andrew Cuomo from Nobel Peace Laureates and world humanitarian and religious leaders urging clemency for David Gilbert

The extraordinary October 3, 2020 Papal Encyclical calls for “a better kind of politics” based on rethinking social charity and justice approaches to the death penalty, and “forgiving not forgetting.” We write with those sentiments in mind, aware that inordinately long prison sentences are designed more for punishment and revenge than rehabilitation and remorse. Rarely has there been a person in prison who demonstrates the unconscionable folly of such sentences as much as David Gilbert.

Gilbert is a seventy-six-year-old man who has served thirty-nine years in New York state prisons for his participation as an unarmed getaway driver during the 1981 Brinks robbery. He has long taken responsibility for his role, apologized to the victim families through appropriate channels, and been a mentor and teacher to younger incarcerated men. He has consistently promoted peaceful conflict resolution inside prison. Remarkably, David has served his nearly four-decade imprisonment without a single institutional violation, a unique and exemplary record evincing respectful behavior.

As international humanitarian and human rights advocates, recognized for our own work for peace and nonviolence in Ireland, South Africa, the USA and elsewhere, we urge you to use your clemency power to free David Gilbert, as well as other remorseful elder prisoners serving inordinately long prison sentences.

We do this in part with the Covid-19 pandemic in mind: However long these sentences are, they were not intended to be a death penalty. We see daily that elders in prison, especially those with compromised immune systems and underlying health concerns, are in grave danger and many have died. For us, like you and your father before you, opposition to the death penalty is a religious and moral principle.

We are confident that David Gilbert's release presents no threat to public safety. To the contrary, his release would help peacefully resolve an era of tragic conflict. It would also serve as encouragement to others incarcerated, demonstrating that no matter how serious the crime, society will recognize that someone can apply themselves to study and reflection and become a new person with the ability to contribute to their communities and families. David's good work during his decades of incarceration, improving through peer-based education how prisons dealt with HIV/AIDS, showcases how prisoners can encourage one another towards positive transformation. Hundreds, possibly thousands of lives were saved.

Among those of us supporting the call for clemency are Nobel Peace laureates awarded for our efforts to bring an end to armed confrontation through peaceful resolution. When His Holiness Pope Francis acknowledged non-Catholics in his Encyclical, Desmond Tutu, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, and Mahatma Gandhi were the three specifically named by the Holy Father. Similarly inspired by Archbishop Emeritus Tutu, who initiated this call in an appeal he wrote years ago, we all—including Gandhi's beloved granddaughter and Dr. King's daughter—join in his assertion that “our common beliefs in renewal, rehabilitation, and positive change all provide a foundation which makes it possible for Governor Cuomo to grant freedom.” As David Gilbert remains a witness to generations of injustice and violence, we are moved to urge Governor Cuomo to take positive action—in the spirit of this season at this historic moment. As a sign of healing, especially in response to the Covid-19 crisis, we pray that Governor Cuomo will exercise his authority and grant clemency to David and other elders in prison at risk from the coronavirus.

19 Nov - Jalil Muntaqim Receives Voting Pardon, But Future of Court Case Uncertain

Jalil Muntaqim has received a conditional pardon from the governor.

MORE:

by Darien Lamén (*Reclaiming the Narrative*)

According to a NYS Department of Corrections website, Jalil Muntaqim was recently issued a conditional pardon that restores his right to vote while on parole. The website was updated with the change within the last week.

The governor's office processes voting pardons for people on parole on a monthly basis as a matter of routine, in accordance with a 2018 Executive Order.

It's unclear whether this development will have any impact on a court case in which the Monroe County District Attorney claims Muntaqim broke the law by allegedly registering to vote in October, shortly after his release from prison.

Muntaqim's supporters have said the charges in that case, which include two felonies and one misdemeanor, are politically motivated.

The DA filed the charges in the weeks leading up to the 2020 presidential election, after local right-wing pundits and GOP leadership accused Muntaqim of voter fraud and called for his prosecution.

Muntaqim's mother has said publicly that he mistakenly filled out a voter registration form included in a stack of applications he received after his release to facilitate his return to the community.

Muntaqim had been scheduled to appear in Brighton Town Court Monday, but that court date was moved to next month.

With grand jury selection suspended in New York State due to rising COVID-19 rates, it's unclear when the case will move forward. Unless, of course, the charges are dropped or dismissed.

November 25th - Governor denies restoring voting rights to parolee Jalil Muntaqim

by David Andreatta (*WXXI News*)

Jalil Abdul Muntaqim, a parolee living in Brighton facing felony charges for attempting to register to vote, has been denied a pardon from the governor restoring his right to cast a ballot that is granted to most parolees, according to the Governor's Office and the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

Parolees are not allowed to vote in New York upon release from prison without the pardon.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has issued such pardons as a matter of course on a monthly basis since 2018, when he signed an executive order directing the corrections commissioner to submit to him each month a list of every felon newly eligible for parole, with each name to be "given consideration for a conditional pardon that will restore voting rights."

Anyone on the list is eligible for a pardon as long as they are not flagged by law enforcement for any specific concerns. Most parolees receive their pardon, which does not expunge their record, within four to six weeks of their release.

A spokesperson for the Governor's Office said Muntaqim was denied a voting pardon last week.

In a notable twist, however, the Department of Corrections listed Muntaqim on its website as having received the pardon. The spokesperson called the listing "a clerical error."

The error could be found as recently as Monday on the department's "Parolee Lookup" page, which provides information on parolees to the public, including their date of birth, parole status, and whether their voting rights have been restored.

On the page assigned to Muntaqim, the word "Yes" was shown next to a line that indicates whether a voting pardon has been issued. The agency modified that to "No" late Monday after CITY inquired about Muntaqim's voting eligibility status.

Muntaqim, 69, was released from prison on parole on Oct. 7, after serving nearly 50 years on a pair of first-degree murder convictions in the 1971 shooting deaths of two New York City police officers. He was convicted and served under his given name, Anthony Bottom.

About two weeks after his release, the Monroe County District Attorney's Office charged Muntaqim with tampering with public records and offering a false instrument for filing, both felonies, and a misdemeanor for filing a completed voter registration form with the county Board of Elections.

Muntaqim filled out the form the day after his release, before being notified whether he had received the governor's pardon. He filled out the form using his given name, which he never formally changed after assuming his new name in prison decades ago.

The Board of Elections subsequently rejected his registration.

A conditional pardon restoring Muntaqim's voting rights would have put a wrinkle into his prosecution, which has gotten the attention of national organizations that advocate for expanded ballot access for formerly incarcerated people.

Muntaqim has been arraigned in Brighton Town Court and is scheduled to appear next on Dec. 14.

Should he be convicted on the felonies, he would likely be returned to prison. One of the felonies carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. The other carries a maximum of four years.

"This case is just another reminder of the extreme outcome for the underlying act that is being called into question and the extreme level of punitiveness that characterizes American criminal jurisprudence," said Nicole Porter, director of advocacy at the Sentencing Project, a group for criminal justice reform.

"It is incredibly frustrating that prosecutors are willing to make an example of this man and take away someone's liberty for something like this," Porter said. "I don't know how these prosecutors sleep at night."

The United States has a long history of disenfranchising felons, even after they've served their time, although a national movement to restore their voting rights is gaining traction. This month, California and Florida overwhelmingly approved measures to re-enfranchise voting rights to parolees.

"The point of parole is to encourage people to reintegrate themselves into the community in a healthy way," said Sean Morales-Doyle, deputy director of the Brennan Center's Voting Rights and Elections Program at New York University. "We should all want people who are being released from prison and returned to their communities to play a productive role in their communities. That shouldn't be a controversial proposition."

District Attorney Sandra Doorley said in an interview that Muntaqim's case was presented to her as an instance of potential voter fraud and that the facts were straightforward.

Reached at home, Muntaqim declined to comment. His lawyer, a public defender, also declined.

His mother, Billie Bottom Brown, has called his filing of a voter registration form "a mistake." She said the form was within a packet of paperwork provided to her son to help him assimilate back into society.

Friends of Muntaqim's said the paperwork was provided by the county's Department of Human Services, which helps newly released prisoners acclimate. Those packets include everything a former inmate might

need — information on Medicaid, food stamps, child care, becoming an organ donor, and a voter registration form.

"I don't think he was trying to game the system" by signing the form, said James Schuler, 52, a youth advocate in Wayne County who has known Muntaqim since they met as inmates at Auburn Correctional Facility in 2000 and considers him a mentor.

"One thing he wanted to be more than anything was be a productive member of society," Schuler said. "They gave him paperwork to do that and he signed."

19 Nov - Court Issues Injunction Against Tree-Sitters

While the world has been focused on the historic rebellion that erupted following the police murder of George Floyd and the 2020 election spectacle, the ongoing tree-sits in the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Appalachia have continued to be in active resistance for over 800 days.

MORE:

This week however, tree-sitters with Appalachians Against Pipelines were hit with an injunction by the courts to come down from the trees or face arrest – yet the tree-sit still remains and supporters continue to rally in solidarity.

The sits have been protecting some of the last remaining trees in the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline, while community members have been maintaining an encampment below the trees in order to provide tree-sitters with food and other supplies. On Monday, when news of the injunction broke, supporters left their encampment and built barricades around the trees.

According to one report:

A judge has imposed a daily fine for the tree sitters blocking the Mountain Valley Pipeline and is holding them in contempt of court. According to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, each tree sitter will be fined \$500 for each day they stay. This comes after a judge issued a temporary injunction, ordering the three protesters to leave by Monday. Authorities say some of the protesters on the ground left, but others chose to stay in the trees. Authorities say they have the authority to remove the protesters.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline's new completion date is now "the second half of 2021" and the estimated cost of the project has risen to \$5.8-6 billion. This is nearly 3 years past the original projected in-service date of the MVP which is now more than \$2 billion over budget as calls continue to mount for the project to be abandoned.

Check out the timeline of direct ecological resistance and solidarity and stay-up with the campaign by following Appalachians Against Pipelines: facebook.com/appalachiansagainstpipelines

23 Nov - Sundiata Acoli, 83, Once Again Denied Parole

NYC Jericho received the following email from Sundiata.

MORE:

Sundiata Acoli, one of the longest held political prisoners in the u.s. and the world, was denied parole again today. His case was sent to a 3-member panel, which means he will be given an extended hit outside the guidelines: (likely to be 10 to 30 years). Sundiata is a Black man, 83 years old and has already done 47 years straight in prison, with an amazingly positive record. Why is this man still in prison?

Future visiting is cancelled at FCI Cumberland, MD today until further notice due to Covid-19 cases blowing the roof off of the local county hospitals and spilling over into the hospital space of adjacent counties.

We need Justice, Equality and Freedom. Free them All!

23 Nov - While COVID-19 Spreads In NY Prisons, Loved Ones On The Outside Plead With Cuomo For Clemency

As coronavirus positivity rates have been rising throughout New York, 1,713 of the state's 35,834 prisoners had tested positive for COVID-19 as of November 20th, comprising 4.78% of the total prison population. Recent outbreaks have occurred in five New York correctional facilities.

MORE:

by Victoria Law (*Gothamist*)

Public health experts have warned that to reduce transmission of the virus, prisons should be reduced to 50 percent capacity.

So far, Governor Andrew Cuomo has ordered the release of people imprisoned for low-level non-violent convictions who were within 90 days of their release, cancelled low-level parole violations, and released pregnant or postpartum women who were within 180 days of release, leading to the freedom of 3,109 New Yorkers.

One power Cuomo has used sparingly during the pandemic, and throughout his decade as governor: clemency.

Clemency can take two forms—a pardon, i.e. an expungement of a person's criminal record, which typically happens after a prison sentence has been served; or a commutation, i.e. a shortening of a sentence.

California expedited the release of nearly 9,000 prisoners, and Governor Gavin Newsom issued 55 commutations (and four medical reprieves) between March and November. In April, Oklahoma's governor commuted the sentences of 450 prisoners to decrease prison overcrowding.

In contrast, Cuomo granted two commutations in January and another three in June, a number that advocates decried as "outrageous," particularly in the midst of a pandemic.

"Clemency, at this particular point, is an urgent necessity that is being ignored," Steve Zeidman, co-director of the CUNY Law School's Defenders Clinic Second Look Project, told *Gothamist*. "Beyond that, it's also an opportunity."

Zeidman and the clinic currently represent 50 people whose petitions are awaiting the governor's decision.

Bryon Russ was not in either group of commutations issued this year. Russ has already served 20 years for two robberies in which no fatalities occurred.

In 2017, Russ applied for clemency, submitting an application that spanned hundreds of pages listing his accomplishments, including program participation, role as facilitator in the prison's Anti-Violence and Aggressive Replacement Training programs, and college credits. In 2018, he submitted an update with further accomplishments. In 2019, the couple connected with the Criminal Defense Clinic; Zeidman and his team of law students helped Russ submit a new application, including a video biography in which he apologized for his actions.

Without Cuomo's intervention, Russ, now age 44, will not be released until 2034 when he is 73.

In September, he was transferred from Elmira—one month before the prison experienced a surge of COVID-19 cases for a cumulative total of 603—to Sing Sing Correctional Facility, which has had 48 confirmed COVID-19 cases and four deaths.

“I, like many others, am still hopeful that someone will see my efforts and invest in my release knowing my release will not result in a negative result,” Russ told *Gothamist* from prison. “I look forward to uplifting the community I had a hand in destroying. I look forward to putting all my rehabilitative efforts into constructive action. I look forward because there is no backwards.”

The governor’s office declined to comment on whether he will issue more commutations this year.

Russ’s wife Jolene said she carries a copy of her husband’s clemency application wherever she goes, hoping for the chance to hand it to Cuomo in person.

During the pandemic, she said she watched Cuomo’s daily press briefings, her eyes glued to the pen that he used to scribble notes to himself or to his aides. She visualized him using the pen to sign her husband’s commutation.

“The governor has the opportunity to give joy to so many families with the pen in his pocket,” she said.

On Monday, Russ drove from her home near Albany to Midtown Manhattan to rally outside the governor’s office with advocates and family members with incarcerated loved ones, urging him to grant clemencies to people in prison. For the past six holiday seasons, advocates have gathered to plead with Cuomo to commute more sentences, and have mostly been ignored.

“Clemency is about mercy,” reflected Zeidman, calling the governor’s failure to grant more commutations, particularly during the pandemic, “merciless.”

Alfonzo Riley-James knows firsthand about the importance of clemency. In 1988, Riley-James, then 19, and five other men drove from Brooklyn to Albany to rob a drug house. During the robbery, one of the men, Lance Sessoms, shot and killed two men in the house. Originally sentenced to 71 ½ years-to-life, Riley-James appealed and had his sentence modified to 50 years-to-life, which still made him ineligible for a parole hearing until age 69. (Parole eligibility means that he can appear before the parole board; it does not guarantee that the board will approve his release.)

During his 30 years behind bars, Riley-James worked at the prison law library and tutored others in GED prep, literacy, and math, and volunteered in a program to dissuade at-risk youth from making similar mistakes. On New Year’s Eve 2018, he learned that Cuomo had commuted his sentence; one month later, the 49-year-old walked out of prison.

Now a paralegal at the Legal Aid Society’s Wrongful Conviction Unit, Riley-James has not forgotten the men he has left behind.

“I was no anomaly,” he said. “There are others in prison who deserve a chance too, who committed offenses when they were very young, who sought to transform themselves while in prison and given the opportunity, can become contributing members of society. I don’t think people should be condemned, necessarily, for one mistake, for the worst mistake they’ve made of their lives.”

That includes his co-defendant Lance Sessoms, who, then 22, fatally shot the two men. He was sentenced to 75 years-to-life.

Like Riley-James, Sessoms has worked to change his life despite his lengthy sentence. He has earned a college degree, completed numerous prison programs, encouraged others in prison to pursue an education, and parented his three children and now his five grandchildren. “I’m different from 22 years old,” Sessoms told *Gothamist* in 2019. “I am trying to be consistent with my actions and my words.”

Sessoms had not initially applied for clemency. But when his daughter, Danielle Moore, read about his co-defendants’ commutations, she reached out to Zeidman’s office. Moore was four years old when Sessoms

was arrested and convicted. She has vague memories of life with her father before prison, but most of her memories of him involve prison visits and bus rides. At Moore's urging, Sessoms applied for clemency in 2019. Now, the family waits—and is starting to connect with advocates pushing Cuomo to issue more commutations.

Monday's rally outside Cuomo's office will be Moore's first time at a protest on her father's behalf.

"I want Cuomo to understand that our loved ones are in there," Moore, who just turned 36, explained. "We love them and want them to come home."

Her mother, Dorothea Sessoms, agrees. She recognizes the tragic consequences of her husband's 1988 actions—and knows that he does as well. "He understands the seriousness of what happened," she said. During his decades in prison, she's seen him grow, mature and transform his life. If he were released, Dorothea said, he "could help a lot of young kids going down the same wrong path that he chose."

23 Nov - Aging Black Liberation Political Prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, Bedridden with COVID-19 and Cancer, Shows Us Why PA Must #FreeEmAll

As COVID-19 surges through the state and tears through its prisons, loved ones of incarcerated people drove to Harrisburg on November 23rd, calling for Governor Tom Wolf to use his reprieve power to immediately release all elderly and medically vulnerable people in prison.

MORE:

by Suzy Subways (*Prison Health News*)

Loved ones are also asking the Department of Corrections to require prison staff to wear face masks and be tested for COVID-19. As part of a national caravan for health and social justice, the Pennsylvania Poor People's Campaign worked with local anti-prison groups like the Human Rights Coalition and the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI) to center the survival of people in prison on this day. The car caravan will circle the state capitol and proceed to the governor's mansion.

Amid the horror that is the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections right now, Black liberation movement political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz may be one of the best examples of how that horror is playing out for elderly prisoners and their families. Maroon is 77 years old and has been fighting stage 4 colon cancer for over a year. After testing positive for COVID-19 on Nov. 11, Maroon was held in a gymnasium with 29 other men—and only one toilet to share between them. Meanwhile, he has had blood in his stool, and his urgent surgery for the cancer is now being denied.

After supporters and loved ones called the governor last week, Maroon was finally moved to the infirmary. His daughter, Theresa Shoatz, says that her father called her on Saturday night to let her know that the room was extremely cold—and that he believes this was intentional, as retribution for the movement's phone calls to the governor. Shoatz called the infirmary and asked staff to give him a blanket, but she says they responded that they would not do so. Finally, staff gave him blankets later that night. Maroon is wearing Depends and he has to change them himself, but is not able to pull himself up enough to sit up.

The Violence of Keeping the Elderly in Prison

On April 10, Gov. Wolf announced a temporary program to release vulnerable people from prison during the pandemic so that the remaining incarcerated people could practice social distancing. But activists say only about 600 imprisoned community members were released under the program. Why the cold feet? Despite public health recommendations, "violent offenders" were not eligible.

In its report, *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities during COVID-19: Advancing Health, Equity, and Safety*, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine observe that this is bad policy. "People convicted of violent offenses have lower overall recidivism rates for all age groups compared with

individuals convicted of nonviolent offenses, though the recidivism rates are particularly lower for people 55 and over,” the report notes. In other words, “violent offenders” are less likely to be arrested and sent to prison again than “non-violent offenders,” and—the common sense seems obvious on this one—when someone is elderly, they are even less likely to get in trouble with the law. The report recommends releasing medically vulnerable people as an “appropriate and necessary mitigation strategy to include in the COVID-19 response in correctional facilities.”

An Elder of #BlackLivesMatter

“Police brutality is the reason our people are inside,” says Russell Shoatz III, Maroon’s son. Maroon has been in prison since 1972 because he was a leader in the fight against police brutality in the 1960s and ’70s. He’s an elder of the most powerful movement this country has ever seen.

Maroon was held in solitary confinement for nearly 30 years, after two escape attempts he made over 40 years ago in the tradition of the maroon communities that escaped enslaved Africans created throughout the Americas. In his book, *Maroon the Implacable*, he makes this history come alive for younger generations. During his almost half-century in prison, he has mentored dozens of fellow prisoners, some of whom have become leading activists on the inside and outside, including Saleem Holbrook, who is now executive director of the Abolitionist Law Center.

To see the legendary Maroon Shoatz treated this way as a terminally ill (14% of people with stage IV colon cancer are likely to be alive five years after they are diagnosed) elder is horrifying. And who knows how many others are in his shoes? According to Theresa Shoatz, Pennsylvania prisoners have been unable to make phone calls to let people outside know how bad COVID is inside right now.

We cannot let the DOC kill this visionary leader before he sees freedom. His family and community need him home now.

Call, Tweet, Share, Sign On

Maroon’s Global Network—family members, loved ones and supporters of Maroon—is seeking Pennsylvania human rights and criminal justice organizations to sign on to a support letter to Governor Tom Wolf, Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman, and Attorney General Josh Shapiro demanding his immediate and unconditional release. Please ask groups you are part of or know to sign the letter if they are located in Pennsylvania.

Community members are still needed to call Gov. Wolf’s office to demand Maroon’s release as well, mentioning that he is a COVID-19–positive elderly prisoner. The number is 717.787.2500.

The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement has created a #FreeMaroon social media toolkit to help everyone come up with social media posts to spread the word and pressure the governor: tiny.cc/MXGMtoolkit

And you can donate to support Maroon’s Global Network here: russellmaroonshoats.wordpress.com/donate

We ask for nothing less than the immediate and unconditional release of Maroon. But we also demand much more. While suffering in innumerable ways on Saturday night, Maroon himself told his daughter to advocate for others. “Maroon wanted to address the other 29 guys left in the gym,” Theresa Shoatz says.

We must fight for everyone in prison now—they are all someone’s loved ones. We must #FreeMaroon.

November 27th - Message from Maroon

"Prison doctor released me from my COVID-19 + quarantine struggles – to return to my single cell tomorrow to await my surgery; "in two weeks", the prison doctor (Prince) says. ~ Had one terrible night + one I struggled with. ~ Otherwise the cold and lack of light in my private Infirmary room is a challenge; a

LOT of prayer overcame most of that. ~ From what little I can tell, this prison's staff & prisoners are ALL struggling with COVID-19 & how to keep prisoners in here! ~ Maybe "someone's" higher-up are going for the proverbial "herd immunity" the TV doctors talk about? ~ Low on battery & no charger until i'm released. ~ My Solidarity to all pulling for me! ~ Try to stay healthy!"

25 Nov - Call for Week of Action in Commemoration of Michael Reinoehl Dec 3-10

Call from the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement (RAM) to commemorate the life of assassinated antifascist Michael Reinoehl.

MORE:

by Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement (*It's Going Down*)

On Thursday, September 3rd, 2020, state agents murdered antifascist Michael Forest Reinoehl in cold blood in Washington state, by direct order of fascist US president Donald Trump. This is the first extrajudicial assassination of an antifascist directly by this regime in the United States.

Reinoehl, in an act of revolutionary self-defense, shot a fascist who threatened himself and a friend.

This is a call to action and a commemoration for Michael. An injury to one of us is an injury to all. We are calling for people to take actions in their cities, towns, neighborhoods, or homes. Whether banner drops, poster, demonstrations, direct actions, lighting fireworks, commemorations, or whatever creative ideas people come up with; we want the world to know that this will neither be forgotten nor forgiven.

When the State begins targeted assassinations, rule through terror becomes consolidated. Anarchists, antifascists, and all revolutionaries must stand in solidarity against these attacks and against the capitalist, imperialist state— particularly when in the fear of collapse it bares its teeth. We will not be intimidated. We will fight.

25 Nov - Demand freedom for Ed Poindexter

Ed Poindexter finally filed his application for commutation of sentence on August 17.

MORE:

At the August Pardons Board meeting, Dr. Topolski, a new supporter, asked the governor to expedite Ed's application because of the risk of covid19. The governor said he wasn't inclined to let anybody "jump in line" (there are 49 other applications for sentence commutations). His case will probably be heard early next year.)

Please share this campaign, write a letter to the Pardons Board and sign the online petition:

chn.g.it/vctskKv49k Ed would be very grateful. We would also appreciate if you could send us a copy of your letter to: freedomford@gmail.com Thank you so much for your decades of support for Ed, and for Mondo we Langa!

Ed's Story

In April of 1971, Edward Poindexter and Mondo we Langa, formerly David Rice, were sentenced to life in prison for the death of an Omaha police officer—a crime they did not commit. The two were targeted by law enforcement and wrongfully convicted due to their affiliation with the Black Panther Party, a civil rights and anti-fascist political group.

Nearly 50 years later, Ed is still in prison and maintains his innocence. He has earned several college degrees, taught anti-violence classes to youth, authored screenplays, and more. His last chance for freedom is to receive a commutation of sentence from the Nebraska Board of Pardons. At age 75, he is at high risk for COVID related health complications. He must receive an immediate and expedited commutation hearing from the Board.

Take Action Now

Write, email and call the Nebraska Board of Pardons. Request that they commute Ed's sentence.

WRITE:

Nebraska Board of Pardons
Post Office Box 95007
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
please email a copy of your letter to freedomford@gmail.com

EMAIL: ne.pardonsboard@nebraska.gov

CALL:

Governor Pete Ricketts: 402.471.2244
SoS Robert B. Eymen: 402.471.2554
AG Doug Peterson: 402.471.2683

Sample Letter

Dear Pardons Board:

I am writing in regards to Edward Poindexter, #27767, who has served nearly 50 years in prison with exemplary behavior and many accomplishments. He is 75 years old and at high risk for COVID-19 related medical complications, which have been amplified by the increased COVID transmission rate among prisoners. I am therefore requesting that the Board expedite Ed's application, schedule his hearing for the next available Board meeting, and commute his sentence to length of time served.

You can read more about Ed at nycabc.wordpress.com/guide

26 Nov - Let's free Lore Elisabeth

In this season of giving and thankfulness, please help us to bring Lore Elisabeth home to the community who need and miss her so much.

MORE:

She needs your love now more than ever:
Donate via PayPal: tiny.cc/LoreDonate OR Venmo: [@WeLoveLore](https://venmo.com/@WeLoveLore)

Lore faces up to 80 years in prison as a scapegoat for the Trump government's failures to protect the vulnerable. They keep her in a COVID-ravaged dungeon to scare us away from protecting and caring for each other, but we will never give in to their violent intimidation tactics.

Thanks to you we've raised more than half of the fee to defend Lore at trial, but that leaves us a long way yet to go. We need to raise at least \$25,000 to reach our goal. Being a political prisoner is shockingly expensive, but we will stop at nothing to free Lore from this horror. The best civil rights lawyers in the city are on the case, preparing to defend Lore from the notorious right-wing US Attorney and frequent Fox News goblin, William McSwain.

If you're from the region, then you'll recognize McSwain from those threatening billboards he bought with your money; or from rallying with Mike Pence and the Proud Boys; or his ridiculous persecution of Anthony Smith. A typical Trump follower, McSwain bleats about "law and order," but seeks his political power by simply tearing families and communities like ours apart. Defeating him will save so many more lives than just Lore's. And we can do it.

I could never thank you all enough for the generosity and care that you've shown my dear little sister, especially for her birthday last month. Your love gifted her the first feelings of real joy in months of captivity. I can't wait to see her happy at home, so I'm asking again for your help, to contribute if you can--anything you can--and to share this appeal for the caregiver who needs our care so desperately.

27 Nov - Article from Casey Brezik

Please see the piece below, by Casey Brezik, transcribed verbatim, except for correcting what the NDAA stands for. He wants y'all to know that he can only respond by letter and it may take him a little while to reply to any letters because of his situation (he is currently in solitary confinement). If anyone sends him money, please shoot him a letter to let him know, since he has received some, but does not know who from.

MORE:

I was recently reading an issue of *Anathema*. It inspired me to write to you all. I realize that I haven't in a while, but I find reason to now. I hate to say this, but I feel it **MUST** be said: I find flaw in our current tactics. Bear with me as I try to explain. I'm no expert at leading readers through a natural linear progression of thought, but I will cover everything.

The first issue I want to address is our representing the people in our collectively shared struggles. Currently, we're seeing hopeful signs amongst the people that a revolution may be possible after all. At least this is the case from our point of view. I believe we all come to this conclusion based on our own progressions toward enlightenment as anarchists, and recognizing the people are resting on a cusp. Who amongst us hasn't reveled in, or dreamt of, marching through the streets after dark 1000 strong to confront the police head on? Or, to partake in mass riots and looting? To us, all this chaos seems like a dream. However, it's quickly becoming a nightmare. All of the tactics we used to cherish: Black Bloc, Antifa, inciting riots and disorder. All of these things we took pride in because we used them to define ourselves as anarchists, have come under pressure. Not just from the media (the government's "thought police"), but now also the people themselves. This comes at a very confusing time for us because we actually enjoyed temporary praise from people on the streets. People were grateful and expressed feeling safer because we were there. Antifa was actually being praised in the media! I saw it myself! However, things quickly took a turn for the worse when the "peace police" began showing up to steal our glory, and "talk sense" into the protestors that "craved blood." I'll be completely honest with you, though...I agree with them! We have no place in these street protests any longer. At least not to express our anarchist identity. Mobs are pulling off people's masks and holding agitators until the police arrive. The very agency they claim to be protesting against. There is a massive majority of people who have announced they "only want peace." They either fail to realize or refuse to accept that "peace comes from the barrel of a gun". They overlook the truth in cliché terms like "freedom isn't free," or "to keep the peace, you must prepare for war." I feel a lot of us take these terms for granted, too. But that's exactly the point of our agitations, isn't it; an attempt to show the authorities that we, too, are a force to be reckoned with?

Well, I see things in a different light and would like to propose you might want to start as well. Instead of attempting to hold onto our past (our former means of conducting "business"), let's step into the future. Gone are the days when we could agitate insurrection, the time has arrived that we can now **PREPARE** for one. Protests and riots in the street that we once considered a strong point, have become a liability. The positives to this assessment...because there's always something positive to be taken from any negative, and vice versa. It may not be proportional, but it's there. And in this case, the positive aspect is the greater force.

1. The people **ARE** becoming agitated (maybe due to media coverage, but their "mind control" can't work on everyone)
2. These mass gatherings are allowing us to make affinity with one or two radicals we normally wouldn't be in contact with. So, our numbers are growing... just be careful to use extreme security culture.
3. We can use these mass gatherings as cover for more clandestine operations elsewhere with specific objectives!

I pray #3 makes sense to everyone. If the opposition is concentrated at point A, we should be at points B, C and D...nowhere near point A. I mean look into Google's Maven project. The feds have the ability to compile data on specific "agitators" from drones flying high in the night sky. Many people either don't know this or just don't understand its significance. On December 30th (my B-day) of 2011, Obama signed into law a bill known as the National Defense Authorization Act. In brief, it allows the US military to arrest and detain US citizens on US soil indefinitely and without being charged for suspected terrorist activity. That shit is serious as hell. Throwing a molotov cocktail is a terrorist act!

That said, I beg of you...please, please, please be careful. Never presume someone is not the police. Have them earn their stripes gradually. Utilize circles within circles. Pay VERY close attention to security culture. Violations need to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Leave behind ALL digital devices. Take it back to the old school days of analog. Maybe use fireworks of different colors to communicate over long distances.

In short, I see this current situation of ours as a golden opportunity for us to step our game up to the next level. Let's lead by example once more by showing the people exactly what's possible. Just in case the moment should arrive when they too are ready to take things to the next level. Let's not be caught unprepared again. Let this be a lesson we learn from because we've fallen into a junction in our history when our situation in the eyes of those looking to us for direction can be summarized as sink or swim.

Lastly, I'd like to leave you with a recommendation for my favorite book. It is a tried and true classic that goes by the title THE ART OF WAR, written by Sun Tzu.

8 Dec - "Can Radicals Use the State?" Discussion with Anarchist Care About Books

WHAT: Discussion

WHEN: 6:00pm, Tuesday, December 8th

WHERE: macc.nyc for details

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join us for a discussion of Wayne Price's article "Can Radicals Use the State?" on electoral system and struggle. You can read the article at anarkismo.net/article/32086

11 Dec - Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) General Assembly

WHAT: General Assembly

WHEN: 6:30pm, Friday, November 13th

WHERE: YOUR HOME

COST: FREE

MORE:

We will be hosting another "Virtual" General Assembly for December - lookout in your various Working Group platforms, e-mail listservs, Loomio, et cetera for details on how to join the assembly. General Assemblies are the most ideal place for new folks to plug-in to MACC, learn about our projects and ongoing efforts, and connect to organizers. There will be a 6:30-7PM orientation for new folks that would like to get connected and learn more about MACC's structure and history.

Our topic for this month will be gendered violence in movement spaces. Often these type of conversations happen in private, out of the realm of a public political space, so we're giving them a forum. Let's build a culture of care.

Please review these documents before coming:

macc.nyc/organizing

macc.nyc/safer-spaces