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Updates for August 9th

6 Jul - Water Protectors' Cases Dismissed on Indigenous Sovereignty Grounds

Three Indigenous Water Protectors have had their criminal cases dismissed in a major legal victory for Indigenous sovereignty and treaty-reserved rights.

MORE:

via Civil Liberties Defense Center

Anishinaabe Water Protectors Nancy Beaulieu, Justin Keezer, and Todd Thompson were charged with criminal trespass for their presence at the Fire Light Camp, an eight-day ceremonial camp held at the Mississippi River in June 2021. The Fire Light Camp was located on territory ceded to the United States by treaty, where Enbridge Energy Corporation was building its Line 3 fossil fuel pipeline to cross the river near its headwaters.

Pipeline construction threatened sacred waters, including the Mississippi headwaters, as well as the concomitant ability to hunt, fish, gather, and engage in religious and cultural practices central to Anishinaabe people, and threatened the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirits as part of the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives. In the face of these threats, Indigenous Water Protectors and their invited guests lit a ceremonial fire, and camped on the matting that stretched over the Mississippi River so that Enbridge's pipeline couldn't be built through it.

Fire Light Camp participants were originally charged and prosecuted for trespass by the State of Minnesota in Clearwater County District Court. The cases of several Indigenous participants were subsequently transferred to White Earth Tribal Court, including the cases of Ms. Beaulieu, Mr. Keezer, and Mr. Thompson. Last week, White Earth Tribal Court Judge David DeGroat issued an order granting the three Water Protector's motions and dismissing their cases on grounds that their actions were lawful exercises of sovereign Indigenous rights reserved in the 1855 Treaty and protected nonviolent direct action pursuant to the White Earth Tribal Code.

"This is a landmark case," Mr. Keezer explained. "As Judge DeGroat's order states, neither treaty nor federal law purports to divest Anishinaabe people from our sovereign usufructuary rights on our treaty-ceded lands, including the right to hold religious ceremonies, invite guests of our choosing to share in those experiences, and protect the water that is life."

"My goal was to redefine the relationship we have to nature and the way we view rights," Ms. Beaulieu stated. "Colonized courts define nature as property, property to be exploited under capitalism. But native people have relationships with nature and an inherent ancestral obligation to protect the land and water not only for ourselves, but for our children and grandchildren."

"This is simple," Mr. Thompson described. "We have a connection to our land. We are caretakers of our land. The land is who we are and how we take care of our families. We have inherent rights from the creator, and a responsibility to defend our way of life, and it doesn't get any higher than that."

All three Water Protectors emphasized that this was a collective victory, one that required standing together in the face of an often-intimidating colonized legal system. They expressed hope that this victory will inspire others to know their rights, take action, and join them in the future.

14 Jul - Deadly heat remains concern at Texas prisons

Amid a summer heat wave that has pushed temperatures in some Texas prisons without air conditioning to 100° Fahrenheit, many inmates fear dying or falling gravely ill from the hot weather and believe actions taken by officials to mitigate the dangerous conditions continue to fall short, according to a new report.

MORE:

by Juan A. Lozano (*Associated Press*)

The report comes as the head of the Texas prison system told lawmakers this week the oppressive working conditions caused by the lack of air conditioning in many of the state's units is likely contributing to difficulties officials are having in filling 7,000 prison job vacancies.

“Without air-conditioning or regulated temperatures, the system will continue to be under extreme stress and members of the (Texas Department of Criminal Justice) population will remain on the brink of potential health emergencies. This could kill them, but if it doesn't, it will certainly degrade their health over time,” according to a report released this week by the Texas A&M University Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center and Texas Prisons Community Advocates, an advocacy group for inmates.

Advocates and others have been highly critical of the lack of air conditioning in the Texas prison system, which has 120,000 inmates. Only 30% of Texas prison units are fully air-conditioned.

In 2017, U.S. District Judge Keith Ellison in Houston said the nation's largest prison system was “deliberately indifferent” to heat risks and subjected inmates to “a substantial risk of serious injury or death.”

Ellison's comments came as part of a settlement of a lawsuit filed by inmates at one unit.

Texas is one of at least thirteen states in the U.S. that doesn't have universal air conditioning in state prisons, according to the university's report.

In the wake of the settlement, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, or TDCJ, formalized many of the heat mitigation policies it had been following, including providing water and ice, creating respite areas where inmates could go to cool down and allowing inmates to purchase cooling items such as fans or towels.

But the university report called the procedures in place “inefficient and ineffective” as they're not designed to offer system-wide relief but instead rely on overworked prison employees to offer help on an individual basis to inmates while also suffering through the heat themselves.

As part of the report, 309 Texas inmates were surveyed about their experiences.

“I fainted four times in my cell, no reports were filed & I received no medical attention,” one inmate wrote.

Other inmates described seeing prisoners pass out from exhaustion as they worked outside in the heat and not being allowed to go to respite areas where they could cool down.

“This issue is only going to continue to worsen with increasing annual temperatures,” Carlee Purdum, a Texas A&M research professor who helped write the report, told the Texas House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday.

Earlier in the meeting, Bryan Collier, executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, said in the last 10 days, the average temperature inside the housing areas at non-air-conditioned prisons was 91.4 degrees Fahrenheit, with five units having average temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

So far this year, six inmates and 11 employees have been treated for heat related illnesses. There have been no heat-related deaths in Texas prisons since 2012, Collier said. There were 17 deaths from 2000 to 2012, with 10 of those deaths just in 2011, when Texas experienced a record heat wave.

But Collier told lawmakers the prison system has “a wide array of things we do to manage heat,” including providing extra ice and water in housing areas and training staff to monitor temperatures and shut down activities when temperatures get too high.

Collier told lawmakers on Tuesday it would cost about \$1.1 billion to install air conditioning in all of the state’s prison units.

A bill that would have required TDCJ to install air conditioning failed to pass during last year’s legislative session.

State Rep. Carl Sherman said air conditioning can be provided in prisons “if we have the desire to do this.”

“This is about being politically humane,” Sherman said.

22 Jul - Advocates renew calls for clemency for imprisoned Native American activist

At the heart of Pope Francis' "penitential pilgrimage" to Canada July 24-29 was the pursuit of reconciliation with Indigenous people, which is just as relevant in the United States.

MORE:

by Victor Gaetan (*Catholic News Service*)

"The ill-treatment of Indians occurred up and down the continent, in Canada and the U.S.," said Jack Healey, founder of the Human Rights Action Center based in Washington and former director of Amnesty International.

"Pope Francis is a healer," Healey said. "All of us, especially Catholics, should join him to find ways to heal these old wounds."

One example ripe for remedy that he highlighted is the decades-long incarceration of Native American activist Leonard Peltier, now 77.

He was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder in the tragic death of two young FBI agents during a 1975 shootout on a reservation in South Dakota, but the U.S. government later admitted no ballistic evidence supported the charges.

Testimony from the only "witness," a mentally disabled woman, proved to be fabricated, as she wasn't on the reservation at the time and was threatened with physical mutilation — and the loss of her daughter — if she didn't sign an affidavit against Peltier.

"Basically, he was framed," according to Peltier's pro bono attorney, Kevin Sharp, a former federal judge.

He has been imprisoned — in what his supporters describe as extreme conditions — for over 45 years, including 20 with "good behavior." In 2015, most people sentenced to life imprisonment for murder served an average of 27.4 years before being paroled.

Since 2016, Peltier has been housed in the Coleman federal penitentiary, a high-security facility in Florida.

"If this was anyone but Leonard Peltier, he would have been paroled long ago," Sharp told *Catholic News Service*.

Even a former U.S. attorney who prosecuted Peltier, James Reynolds, wrote to President Joe Biden, explaining: "We were not able to prove that Mr. Peltier personally committed any offense on the Pine Ridge Reservation." He now supports executive clemency, which the president can grant.

A major argument for releasing Peltier is his poor health: He suffers from kidney disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and a heart condition. He is virtually blind in one eye since a stroke in 1986. He uses a walker to get around.

Another reason is the great distance from his family. Peltier has four living children (an adult son died of a heart attack), 11 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren. One daughter moved to Kansas to be close to her father, who was in the Leavenworth federal penitentiary, then he was transferred to the Lewisburg federal penitentiary in Pennsylvania in 2005. He has been in Florida since 2011.

Most of his family is in North Dakota where Peltier grew up. Under federal rules, prisoners should be located within 500 miles of their primary residence.

When President Barack Obama was in office, Pope Francis wrote him a letter seeking clemency for Peltier. Last October at the Vatican, the pope brought the case to Biden's attention based on concern expressed by Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston and Miami Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, according to several sources.

Archbishop Wenski even arranged to visit Peltier. While at the airport, on his way, the archbishop got a phone call from the prison canceling the meeting — for no specific reason. Oblate Father Andrew Small, then director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, was flying in from New York until he got the same message.

Jack Magee of St Anthony's Parish in Allston, Massachusetts, helped plan the aborted visit.

"Leonard was so disappointed. He is aware of Archbishop Wenski's longtime work for the people of Haiti. He hoped to visit with a man of true understanding of his plight as a person of color wrongly imprisoned. Leonard was hoping for a message of solace and hope from the archbishop and Father Small," said Magee, who befriended Peltier 45 years ago after hearing a presentation on his fate.

Between staff shortages, pandemic-related restrictions and internal chaos, the prison goes on lockdown frequently, making visits almost impossible to plan — especially for family members on limited budgets living far away.

During the pandemic, prisoners were almost entirely cut off from the world.

Peltier contracted COVID-19 earlier this year "and it was torture," said Sheron Wyant-Leonard, a longtime friend who's "almost like a sister." Her 2021 book, "I Will: How Four American Indians Put Their Life on the Line and Changed History," highlights Peltier's life.

"He was in isolation, with no decent medical treatment, without people to care for him, no phone and terrible, cold food. I don't think I've ever heard him so low," the author said. "I've seen a real change" in him since the pandemic, she added.

Not only has illness taken a toll, but he has been denied access to spiritual guidance, which could be provided if Peltier was freed: North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Band of Chippawa Indians voted to provide Peltier with housing, financial and spiritual support, and medical care.

Although the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 protects the rights of Native people to practice traditional religions, the Bureau of Prisons can arbitrarily block purification ceremonies such as the sweat lodge or pipe rituals under the guidance of spiritual leaders.

"I have participated in many ceremonies including one with Leonard at Leavenworth. I became closer to my Catholic faith," Wyant-Leonard told *CNS*. "Since he was transferred to Coleman, they cut off the sweat lodge and it made a difference. You can get hopeless without spiritual connection."

Lenny Foster is a Navajo spiritual leader who has known Peltier for 50 years.

"He is a very reverent person, a genuine human being," Foster explained. "I started visiting him in 1985. I went three times a year to Leavenworth for cleansing rituals."

But in Florida, prison management told Foster he was barred from leading sweat lodge ceremonies because he was "friendly" with the prisoner.

Foster's voice was deep with controlled outrage as he noted, "How could I not become a friend after visiting him for over 30 years? We are not related. We're from two separate Native nations. We are acquainted, consider each other friends, as they would say, but that is considered a 'no-no.' I never violated their rules and regulations!"

In her research, Wyant-Leonard discovered how offenses committed against Native people impacted Peltier personally, including reeducation and relocation.

When Peltier was 9, he, his little sister and a female cousin were forcibly taken by government agents from their grandmother's home on Turtle Mountain Reservation. Peltier remained at the Wahpeton Boarding School for three years.

It was part of a systematic plan "to erase the cultural identity of American Indians. The first step was boarding schools. 'Kill the Indian but save the child,' was the motto. A student's hair was cut, no Native language could be spoken and of course strict separation from the family was enforced," explained the author.

"This was federal government policy," she said, until President Richard Nixon shifted to an approach emphasizing self-determination, influenced by his Quaker upbringing.

The U.S. Interior Department recently issued a landmark report on boarding schools. Most American schools were government-run; in Canada, most had religious ties, mainly the Catholic Church.

Father Maurice Henry Sands, a Detroit archdiocesan priest, is executive director of the Black and Indian Mission Office in Washington. He is a member of the Ojibway, Ottawa and Potawatomi tribes and was born on an island in Canada. He will be part of the papal pilgrimage.

"Pope Francis is making these efforts to listen to the Native people and to offer an apology on behalf of the church because he recognizes there were very serious injustices that were committed, like in the residential boarding schools," the priest said.

"The Holy Father cares and he wants to do whatever he can to bring about healing and reconciliation in Canada and by extension the U.S. because similar policies were enacted here," he added.

Another tactic to force assimilation was relocating Native Americans to cities. Peltier was exiled to Seattle, where he opened a car repair shop with a friend.

"What does St. Paul write to the Colossians? 'Remember my chains,'" said Wyant-Leonard. "Leonard is a living witness of those words."

She and other supporters are glad to see Peltier's case gaining attention from new quarters including the United Nations. A detailed U.N. report issued in June describes the "lack of any legitimate purpose" for his detention.

Twenty-four Native American state legislators from nine states appealed to Biden requesting his "grace and compassion" regarding Peltier.

And U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Catholic, wrote to the president earlier this year urging him to release the aged prisoner explaining simply, "It is the right thing to do."

August 7th - Leonard Peltier Pod Returns + Sneak Peek of Documentary

We're letting you know first that Season 2, Episode 6 of LEONARD: Political Prisoner will drop on Tuesday, August 9th on all major podcast platforms.

In "What The Hell Just Happened," we rally for clemency on the 46th anniversary of the Oglala shootout at the Black Voters Matter demonstration in Washington D.C., a few hundred yards from where a violent mob stormed the Capitol Building on January 6th. It's a beautiful moment—until a white man in an American flag cape, Navy uniform and Michael Myers mask rushes the stage and wreaks havoc.

Episode 6 is a continuation of Season 2, Episode 5, "Son of June" where we explore Pine Ridge with Chase Iron Eyes, who introduces his Uncle Ernie, friend Dan Merrival, and medicine man Dave Swallow, to contextualize his personal connection to the Oglala fire and Leonard.

The scenes featured in both of these episodes were filmed as part of a documentary adaptation of the podcast, which Chase Iron Eyes is co-directing with us, called Land of the Free* (@lotf_doc on Twitter and Instagram). To see a two-minute preview of the film before anyone else, go to vimeo.com/729835518 and use the password: *sneakypeek*

26 Jul - Solidarity Statements in Support of Pushing Down the Walls

Pushing Down the Walls is a solidarity event with the nationwide Running Down the Walls, which raises funds for the Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) warchest. Events are being organized for September 11th and 18th, inside & outside prison. If there isn't an event near you, consider organizing one.

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July 26th - Dan Baker

The United States of AmeriKKKa is a white supremacist terrorist organization. Their government strives for a monopoly on violence to defend their profits, acquired through the prison industrial plantation and wage slavery. They capture political opponents, even if they don't break laws, making examples out of political prisoners in a campaign of terror and subjugation. Anyone who stands up for human rights, women's liberation, animals or the environment is a potential, if not eventual political prisoner. This government no longer represents the interests of the people of North America, or the world and they never did. It is vital that we, a global community, train to fight and win our freedom.

I'm known as a militant personality, I've been training and fighting my whole life, and I still get my ass kicked when I fight big people. If we want liberation, lives worth living, we need to be strong, healthy and coordinated as a family that defends itself from extinction and humiliation at the hands of violent fascists, racists and dogmatic fanatics. They are working daily to out shoot you, run you down and beat you to death. Whoever works harder will win that fight. Join ABCF-OC on September 18th 2022 to train together and help support Political Prisoners. We need you!

August 4th - Oso Blanco

I thank you all very much for participating in "Pushing Down the Walls." I've been a political prisoner since August 13th, 1999. I've tried my best to overcome the situations at hand that my enemy has handed

me nonstop. At times I've tried my best to survive in here, hustling by cooking food, selling candy, to make ends meet. It's nothing easy. At 55 years old I should be teaching my grandchildren to cook, hunt and fish, as well as taking care of my elderly parents.

I've been able to successfully start the "Children's Art Project". I had to give up most of my money a few times in order to print the products for Children's Art Project to help provide a little bit of support for my comrades in Chiapas who run the schools. I wish to inspire you and all those out there struggling for a better world. In these times, it's extremely difficult to fight for Indigenous People and the Earth. For those that attack our sovereignty and destroy the Mother Earth, they place money and profit above a future for our grandchildren. The situation has become dire. One would be best not to believe any type of politician on either side because they're all full of it. I thank you all that have placed your lives on the line in direct action to protect water, the first medicine, and protect Indigenous People everywhere. We have extreme problems on our Reservations in the north.

There is so much work to be done. It's unbelievable. I've been in these USPs (United States Penitentiaries) all these years watching the Native population in here grow and grow. I know now, more than ever, that political activists must step up their A game and take the great serpent by the horns. This serpent must be crushed before we have no Earth to live on. I thank you all for raising money and giving your efforts by physical strain and activity. I pray that we shall truly overcome the oppression that seeks to destroy and bury us in these cement coffins. It is truly no joke to live in here like a factory farm animal knowing that people are out there more worried about a cellphone and a new car than saving the Earth.

27 Jul - Criminal Charges for More Land Defenders, Resistance Continues

Earlier this month, the Canadian authorities announced they will proceed with upgrading criminal charges for four more land defenders arrested last November.

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The four people were grabbed on the second day of raids this fall, when RCMP made it up past the Gidimt'en Checkpoint and made arrests at Coyote Camp, burning down a cabin and destroying other structures that had been lived in for months.

Sleydo' and three others will join 15 others arrested the day before, and who previously had their charges upgraded to criminal contempt as well. An upcoming hearing on July 28th may bring more news on the repression, as CGL will "decide whether it will pursue further legal action."

While the State continues to attempt to prevent resistance to CGL incursion on Gidimt'en territory, the clan is building a feast hall at Lamprey Creek, just across the bridge from the Gidimt'en Checkpoint. They have called for skilled builders to come help finish the project, as well as other supporters to come to camp to support the day-to-day functioning of camp.

Additionally, Dini ze', Ts'ako ze' and Sky ze' from the Wet'suwet'en Nation will be traveling across so-called Canada in mid-August to build on relationships of solidarity with other Indigenous nations while they continue to resist CGL at home. All these efforts show that the fight against the pipeline is far from over, and that the state and industry attempt to quash resistance have not succeeded.

25 Jul - Mutulu Shakur denied compassionate release despite cancer diagnosis

Prison doctors say the lifelong revolutionary, healer, and stepfather of Tupac Shakur has less than six months to live. Organizers are making a final push to secure his compassionate release.

MORE:

by Mansa Musa (*The Real News Network*)

Watch the episode at tiny.cc/RtB_Mutulu

After 36 years behind bars as a political prisoner, Mutulu Shakur is on his deathbed. The movement elder, healer, and radical Black freedom fighter was diagnosed with stage 3 bone marrow cancer in June of this year. Despite qualifying for compassionate release and having been eligible for parole since 2016, prison and federal authorities have refused to grant Shakur his freedom. With time running out, activists gathered at the Department of Justice on the weekend of July 23 to demand Shakur's release. In this episode of *Rattling the Bars*, Mansa Musa reports from the rally to free Mutulu Shakur.

Born in Baltimore and raised in Queens, Mutulu Shakur first became politically active in the 1960s as a member of the Revolutionary Action Movement and Republic of New Afrika. In 1970, Shakur helped found the People's Drug Program at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx alongside the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords. As the husband of Afemi Shakur, Mutulu Shakur was the stepfather of Tupac Shakur. He was convicted in 1988 for his role in the prison escape of Assata Shakur, as well as for the 1981 robbery of a Brink's armored car in Nanuet, New York, which resulted in the deaths of two police officers and a security guard.

August 1st - The Resounding Right of Mutulu Shakur to Die in Freedom: Where Compassion Fails

by Susie Day

Anyone with a loved one in prison carries around the silent, ceaseless terror that the person so loved will die alone, behind bars.

Currently, 71-year-old Mutulu Shakur, a Black man imprisoned 36 years, lies in a hospital bed in a federal prison medical facility in Lexington, Kentucky. Ravaged by bone marrow cancer, fed by tubes, having lost 25% of his body weight, Shakur has been given weeks – at best, months – to live. His loved ones – family, friends, hundreds of supporters – are trying any and all legal means to get him out. Time and again, the US government and the courts refuse.

Mutulu Shakur, born Jeral Williams in 1950, grew up in New York City. His mother was blind, and so he learned as a child to navigate, not just run-of-the-mill racism, but also the welfare system's byzantine bigotry. When he joined the radical Black movements of the 1960s and '70s, he became Mutulu Shakur. He also became an activist, a community leader, and holistic healer credited with cofounding the Lincoln Detox People's Program, which brought game-changing acupuncture treatment for drug addiction to the impoverished South Bronx. In 1988, with his codefendant Marilyn Buck, Shakur was convicted of conspiracy in several armed robberies, one of which resulted in the deaths of three people, and for the 1979 prison escape of the revolutionary, Assata Shakur. As a revolutionary himself, and as the stepfather of the late rapper Tupac Shakur, Mutulu Shakur is both famous and infamous.

But neither Shakur's notoriety, nor his community work, nor the crimes for which he was convicted should matter now. Mutulu Shakur is dying in prison. He is one of thousands of people – predominantly Black and Brown – who are seriously ill behind bars and asking for release. These are people – regardless of their alleged crimes – whose human right is to lie unshackled in a bed outside prison walls, to say goodbye to those they have loved in this life. Most of them are repeatedly denied compassionate release, or release on any terms.

According to the *Marshall Project*, working with the *New York Times*, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), from 2013 to 2017, approved just 6 percent of the 5,400 applications it received for compassionate release, leaving 266 applicants to die in custody. Applications are often rejected on grounds that prisoners still pose a "risk to public safety" or that the nature of their crime remains too serious to justify release. These rejections, the report continues, "often override the opinions of those closest to the prisoners, like their doctors and wardens."

It's no coincidence that both current and former staff at Shakur's prison have spoken out for his release. In fact, the *Marshall Project*, using statistics to represent thousands of prisoners, describes exactly what is happening to Mutulu Shakur. So, when you read Shakur's story here, know that, even with his

extraordinary history and politics, Shakur is not exceptional. The essence of his fight to get out is true in prisons across the country.

Dr. Barbara Zeller is one of Shakur's medical advocates. She's a New York internist with over 50 years of practice who, because of her medical work in the Bronx, has known Shakur since the mid-1970s. She now interprets Shakur's prison medical records for his family and legal team. According to Zeller, Shakur's medical care has been fairly competent – except: “his diagnosis came two years after he developed symptoms that could have been followed. Because of that delay, the cancer was far advanced.”

Although Shakur's multiple myeloma was diagnosed in 2019, Shakur had already begun suffering years before from diseases that often accompany life inside prison: type 2 diabetes, hypertension, glaucoma, hyperlipidemia, and the aftereffects of a stroke in 2013. Since his cancer diagnosis, he has gone through exhausting rounds of chemotherapy, a stem cell transplant, a relapse, more rounds of chemo, pneumonia, and at least two bouts of Covid. By spring of this year, the cancer had spread throughout Shakur's skeletal system.

“He's in a lot of pain,” says Zeller, “extremely debilitated and too weak to take more chemotherapy. He's facing the end of his life. Medical people feel that his staying in prison is elder abuse.”

According to the terms of his sentence, Shakur was actually eligible for “mandatory parole” on February 10, 2016. But the US Parole Commission denied his release. Since 2016, Shakur has survived, not only catastrophically poor health, but also eight more parole denials and three rejections of compassionate release. During his parole hearings, Shakur has taken responsibility for his part in the loss of lives, and voiced deep and unmistakably sincere remorse.

His legal team has also made attempts at federal clemency and release through the “good time” accredited to people like Shakur who were convicted under federal “old law” before 1987. Given this option, Shakur is eligible for 976 “good days,” which would – in theory – have let him out years ago. Nothing has worked.

Legal connections between the Department of Justice (DOJ) and district courts are infinitely murky. On one hand, says the Marshall Project, the US Sentencing Commission deems release considerations best left to the courts, but: “judges can rule on compassionate release requests only if the Bureau of Prisons approves them first.” On the other hand, *The Intercept* quotes a BOP spokesperson who asserts: “At all times, the decision on whether to grant [release] ... lies with the sentencing court.” [Italics, mine]

In late 2020, the Honorable Charles S. Haight, Jr., who sentenced Shakur to 60 years in prison in 1988, ruled on Shakur's latest request for compassionate release. Acknowledging the incurable cancer that had, at that point, reached Shakur's “skull, his jaw, and his shoulders,” and the fact that Shakur's life expectancy was then estimated at about two years, Haight concluded that release was impossible, given Shakur's “criminal conduct, indefensibly undertaken for political reasons.” However, Haight allowed – straining every remaining quality of mercy – that if Shakur's cancer were to take him “to the point of approaching death, he may apply again to the Court, for a release that ... could be justified as ‘compassionate.’”

This has inspired some of Shakur's friends to interpret Haight's ruling basically as, “Come back when you're dead.”

More motions have been filed on Shakur's behalf, including a habeas corpus, which met with limited success until the DOJ shot it down in May of this year. Addressing Shakur personally, the DOJ cited “your commendable prison programming record” and “terminal cancer,” but denied release on the stupefying grounds of “the reasonable probability” that, if released, “you ... still have the means and opportunity to influence others” and “could commit a Federal, State, or local crime.”

Shakur's codefendant Marilyn Buck also faced terminal cancer. In 2010, Buck was flown from a BOP medical facility in Carswell, TX to a New York City airport, where, weak and in pain, she greeted friends

in a wheelchair. Unlike Shakur's case, the BOP had given Buck a parole release date. With the understanding that her cancer would kill her before her designated release, Buck's date was moved up, allowing her to die in the home of friends three weeks after getting out.

If, at this point, you were to notice a racial bias in the carceral system, Marilyn Buck – a staunch antiracist – would be the first to agree with you. Attorney Nkechi Taifa, who knew and loved Buck, is on Shakur's defense team. "Even though we're all together in this struggle," Taifa said, "there's still vast disparities of race. All the white people in Shakur's cases have been released on parole or clemency. But Mutulu Shakur, a Black man, languishes in prison."

Shakur's case now returns to Judge Haight, who is currently reading last-minute motions from the DOJ and Shakur's defense team. He will likely rule again in early August. Meanwhile, Shakur's "Appeal and Request for Reconsideration" is at the U.S. Parole Commission, which has already denied an earlier appeal. One member of Shakur's legal team conjectures that, even if Haight were to decide for Shakur's release, the Parole Commission could well overrule his decision.

What does any of this mean for justice in the United States? Hannah Arendt's depiction of Adolf Eichmann, the petty bureaucratic condemned for mass murder, comes close:

His conscience was indeed set at rest when he saw the zeal and eagerness with which "good society" everywhere reacted as he did. He did not need to "close his ears to the voice of conscience," as the judgment has it, not because he had none, but because his conscience spoke with a "respectable voice," with the voice of respectable society around him.

Arendt's portrait is relevant now, not in condemning Charles Haight or any particular person at the DOJ, but for the ease with which racially maneuvered death sentences like Shakur's weave themselves into the bureaucracy of "respectable" American culture, quietly and unnoticed.

Actually, some people have noticed. On July 20, a delegation of supporters appeared at the Department of Justice building in Washington, DC to deliver an open letter, signed by nearly 200 clergy people. Titled "Faith Leaders for Mutulu Shakur," the letter calls "unconditionally" for Shakur's immediate release. Noting the DOJ's own "PATTERN risk assessment tool," which puts Shakur in the lowest possible recidivism risk category, the letter begins, "As faith leaders, we believe in redemption and salvation – tenets that could not be more appropriately understood than in [this] case"

A press conference outside the Justice building was attended by a range of people: clergy; healers and organizers who worked with Shakur back in the day; young Movement 4 Black Lives activists who were newborns when Shakur went to prison... I'm there, too. I want to witness the open expression of the right of any human being to die outside prison – even as hope, hour by hour, seems to fade.

But back in the Bronx, Barbara Zeller has other thoughts. "Mutulu, he's such a fighter," says Zeller. "He tells his health providers to do anything they can to keep him alive because he is absolutely, deep-down convinced he will see freedom."

Maybe you could say that, hour by hour, at the end of his life, Mutulu Shakur is living out his last work of activism.

31 Jul - When whistleblowers go to prison, we're on the road to tyranny

Daniel Hale is in a supermax prison for telling the truth about America's drone war. That prison awaits us all.

MORE:

by Chris Hedges (*Salon*)

Daniel Hale, dressed in a khaki uniform, his hair cut short and sporting a long, neatly groomed brown beard, is seated behind a plexiglass screen, speaking into a telephone receiver at the federal prison in

Marion, Illinois. I hold a receiver on the other side of the plexiglass and listen as he describes his journey from working for the National Security Agency and the Joint Special Operations Task Force at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan to becoming federal prisoner 26069-07.

Hale, a 34-year-old former Air Force signals intelligence analyst, is serving a 45-month prison sentence, following his conviction under the Espionage Act for disclosing classified documents about the U.S. military's drone assassination program and its high civilian death toll. The documents are believed to be the source material for "The Drone Papers" published by *The Intercept*, on October 15, 2015.

These documents revealed that between January 2012 and February 2013, U.S. special operations drone airstrikes killed more than 200 people — of which only 35 were the intended targets. According to the documents, over one five-month period of the operation, nearly 90 percent of the people killed in airstrikes were not the intended targets. The civilian dead, usually innocent bystanders, were routinely classified as "enemies killed in action."

The terrorizing and widespread killing of thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of civilians was a potent recruiting tool for the Taliban and Iraqi insurgents. The aerial attacks created far more hostile fighters than they eliminated and enraged many in the Muslim world.

Hale is composed, articulate and physically fit from his self-imposed regime of daily exercise. We discuss books he has recently read, including John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* and Nicholson Baker's *Baseless: My Search for Secrets in the Ruins of the Freedom of Information Act*, which explores whether the U.S. used biological weapons on China and Korea during World War II and the Korean War.

Hale is currently housed in the Communications Management Unit (CMU), a special unit that severely restricts and heavily monitors communications, including our conversation, and visitations. The decision by The Bureau of Prisons to lock Hale up in the most restrictive wing of a supermax prison ignores the recommendation of the sentencing Judge Liam O'Grady, who suggested that he be placed in a low-security prison hospital facility in Butner, North Carolina, where he could get treatment for his PTSD.

Hale is one of a few dozen people of conscience who have sacrificed their careers and their freedom to inform the public about government crimes, fraud and lies. Rather than investigate the crimes that are exposed and hold those who carried them out to account, the two ruling parties wage war on all who speak out.

These men and women of conscience are the lifeblood of journalism. Reporters cannot document abuses of power without them. The silence on the part of the press over Hale's imprisonment, as well as the persecution and imprisonment of other champions of an open society, such as Julian Assange, is stunningly shortsighted. If our most important public servants, those with the courage to inform the public, continue to be criminalized at this rate, we will cement in place total censorship, resulting in a world where the abuses and crimes of the powerful are shrouded in darkness.

Barack Obama weaponized the Espionage Act to prosecute those who provided classified information to the press. The Obama White House, whose assault on civil liberties was worse than those of the Bush administration, used the 1917 Act, designed to prosecute spies, against eight people who leaked information to the press including Edward Snowden, Thomas Drake, Chelsea Manning, Jeffrey Sterling and John Kiriakou, who spent two-and-a-half years in prison for exposing the routine torture of suspects held in black sites.

Also under The Espionage Act, Joshua Schulte, a former CIA software engineer, was convicted on July 13, 2022 of the so-called Vault 7 leak, published by WikiLeaks in 2017, which revealed how the CIA hacked Apple and Android smartphones and turned internet-connected televisions into listening devices. He faces up to 80 years in prison. Assange, although he is not a U.S. citizen, and WikiLeaks is not a U.S.-based publication, was indicted by the Trump administration under the Act.

Obama used the Espionage Act against those who provided information to the press more than all previous administrations combined. He set a terrifying legal precedent, equating informing the public with spying for a hostile power. I published classified material when I was a reporter at *The New York Times*. It is a short step from criminalizing journalism to the imprisonment and murder of reporters, such as Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in 2018 in Istanbul. While Assange was sheltering in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, the CIA discussed kidnapping and assassinating him following the release of the Vault 7 documents.

The Espionage Act has been abused in the past. President Woodrow Wilson used it to throw socialists, including Eugene V. Debs, in prison for opposing America's participation in World War I.

But not until the Trump administration was it turned directly on the press with the indictment of Assange.

Wholesale government surveillance, about which many charged under the Espionage Act tried to warn the public, includes surveillance of journalists. The surveillance of the press, along with those who attempt to inform the public by providing information to reporters, has largely shut down investigations into the machinery of power. The price of telling the truth is too costly.

Hale, trained in the army as a Mandarin linguist, was uneasy the moment he began working in the secretive drone program.

"I needed a paycheck," he says of his work in the Air Force and later as a private contractor in the drone program, "I was homeless. I had nowhere else to go. But I knew it was wrong."

While stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, he took a week off in October 2011 to camp out in New York's Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street movement. He wore his uniform — a gutsy act of open defiance for someone on active duty— and held up a sign that read, "Free Bradley Manning," who had not yet announced her transition.

"I slept in the park," he says. "I was there the morning [Mayor] Bloomberg and his girlfriend made the first attempt to clear the occupiers. I stood with thousands of protestors, including Teamsters and communications workers, who ringed the park. The police backed down. I learned later that while I was in the park, Obama ordered a drone strike in Yemen that killed Abdulrahman Anwar al-Awlaki, the 16-year-old son of the radicalized cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, killed by a drone strike two weeks earlier."

Hale was deployed a few months later to Afghanistan's Bagram Air Force Base.

Hale drifted after leaving the Air Force, dropped out of the New School where he had been attending college, and was lured back into operating drones in 2013 by the private defense contractor National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency where he worked as a political geography analyst between December 2013 and August 2014.

"I was making \$ 80,000 a year," he says into the receiver. "I had friends with college degrees who could not make that kind of money."

Inspired by peace activist David Dellinger, Hale decided to become a "traitor" to "the American way of death." He would make amends for his complicity in the killings, even at the cost of his freedom. He leaked 17 classified documents that exposed the high number of civilian deaths from drone strikes. He became an outspoken and prominent critic of the drone program.

Because Hale was charged under the Espionage Act, he was not permitted to explain his motivations to the court. He was also forbidden from providing evidence to the court that the drone assassination program killed and wounded large numbers of noncombatants, including children.

“Evidence of the defendant’s views of military and intelligence procedures would needlessly distract the jury from the question of whether he had illegally retained and transmitted classified documents, and instead convert the trial into an inquest of U.S. military and intelligence procedures,” government attorneys said in a motion at Hale’s trial.

“The defendant may wish for his criminal trial to become a forum on something other than his guilt, but those debates cannot and do not inform the core questions in this case: whether the defendant illegally retained and transferred the documents he stole,” the government motion continued.

Drones often fire Hellfire missiles equipped with an explosive warhead weighing about 20 pounds. A Hellfire variant, known as the R9X, carries an inert warhead. Instead of exploding, it hurls about 100 pounds of metal through a vehicle. The missile’s other feature includes six long blades tucked inside which deploy seconds before impact, shredding anything in front of it — including people.

Drones hover 24 hours a day in the skies over countries including Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Syria and, before our defeat, Afghanistan. Operated remotely from Air Force bases as far away from the target sites as Nevada, drones fire ordinance that instantly and without warning obliterates homes and vehicles or kills clusters of people. Hale found the jocularly of the young drone operators, who treated the killings as if they were an enhanced video game, disturbing. Child victims of drone attacks were dismissed as “fun-sized terrorists.”

Those who survive drone strikes are often badly maimed, losing limbs, suffering severe burns and shrapnel wounds, and losing their vision and hearing.

In a statement he read at his sentencing on July 27, 2021, Hale said: “I think of the farmers in their poppy fields whose daily harvest will gain them safe passage from the warlords, who will, in turn, trade it for weapons before it is synthesized, repackaged, and re-sold dozens of times before it finds its way into this country and into the broken veins of our nation’s next opioid victim. I think of the women who, despite living their entire lives never once allowed to make so much as a choice for themselves, are treated as pawns in a ruthless game politicians play when they need a justification to further the killing of their sons & husbands. And I think of the children, whose bright-eyed, dirty faces look to the sky and hope to see clouds of gray, afraid of the clear blue days that beckon drones to come carrying eager death notes for their fathers.”

“As one drone operator put it,” he read in court, “‘Do you ever step on ants and never give it another thought?’ That’s what you’re made to think of the targets. They deserved it, they chose their side. You had to kill a part of your conscience to keep doing your job — ignoring the voice inside telling you this wasn’t right. I, too, ignored the voice inside as I continued walking blindly towards the edge of an abyss. And when I found myself at the brink, ready to give in, the voice said to me, ‘You, who had been a hunter of men, are no longer. By the grace of God you’ve been saved. Now go forth and be a fisher of men so that others might know the truth.’”

It was, ironically, the election of Obama that encouraged Hale to join the Air Force.

“I thought Obama, who as a candidate opposed the war in Iraq, would end the wars and lawlessness of the Bush administration,” he says.

However, a few weeks after he took office, Obama approved the deployment of an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan, where 36,000 U.S. troops and 32,000 NATO troops were already deployed. By the end of the year, Obama increased troop levels in Afghanistan again by 30,000, doubling U.S. casualties. He also massively expanded the drone program, raising the number of drone strikes from several dozen the year before he took office to 117 by his second year in office. By the time he left office, Obama had presided over 563 drone strikes that killed approximately 3,797 people, many of whom were civilians.

Obama authorized “signature strikes” allowing the CIA to carry out drone attacks against groups of suspected militants without getting positive identification. His administration approved “follow-up” or “double-tap” drone strikes, which deployed drones to strike anyone who assisted those injured in the initial drone strike. The Bureau of Investigative Journalists reported in 2012 that “at least 50 civilians were killed in follow-up strikes when they had gone to help victims,” during Obama’s first three years in office. Additionally, “more than 20 civilians have also been attacked in deliberate strikes on funerals and mourners” the report read. Obama expanded the footprint of the drone program in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, and established drone bases in Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

“There are several such lists, used to target individuals for different reasons,” Hale writes in an essay titled, “Why I Leaked the Watchlist Documents,” originally published anonymously in May 2016 in the book *The Assassination Complex: Inside the Government’s Secret Drone Warfare Program* by Jeremy Scahill and the staff of *The Intercept*:

“Some lists are closely kept; others span multiple intelligence and local law enforcement agencies,” Hale writes in the essay. “There are lists used to kill or capture supposed ‘high-value targets,’ and others intended to threaten, coerce, or simply monitor a person’s activity. However, all the lists, whether to kill or silence, originate from the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE), and are maintained by the Terrorist Screening Center at the National Counterterrorism Center. The existence of TIDE is unclassified, yet details about how it functions in our government are completely unknown to the public. In August 2013 the database reached a milestone of one million entries. Today, it is thousands of entries larger and is growing faster than it has since its inception in 2003.”

The Terrorist Screening Center, he writes, not only stores names, dates of birth, and other identifying information of potential targets but also stores “medical records, transcripts, and passport data; license plate numbers, email, and cell-phone numbers (along with the phone’s International Mobile Subscriber Identity and International Mobile Station Equipment Identity numbers); your bank account numbers and purchases; and other sensitive information, including DNA and photographs capable of identifying you using facial recognition software.”

Suspects’ data is collected and pooled by the intelligence alliance formed by Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, known as the Five Eyes. Each person on the list is assigned a TIDE personal number, or TPN.

“From Osama bin Laden (TPN 1063599) to Abdulrahman Awlaki (TPN 26350617), the American son of Anwar al Awlaki, anyone who has ever been the target of a covert operation was first assigned a TPN and closely monitored by all agencies who follow that TPN long before they were eventually put on a separate list and extrajudicially sentenced to death,” Hale wrote.

As Hale exposed in the leaked documents, the more than one million entries in the TIDE database include about 21,000 U.S. citizens.

“When the President gets up in front of the nation and says they are doing everything they can to ensure there is near certainty there will be no civilians killed, he is saying that because he can’t say otherwise, because anytime an action is taken to finish a target there is a certain amount of guesswork in that action,” Hale says in the award-winning documentary “National Bird,” a film about whistleblowers in the U.S. drone program who suffered moral injury and PTSD. “It’s only in the aftermath of any kind of ordinance being dropped that you know how much actual damage was done. Oftentimes, the intelligence community is reliant, the Joint Special Operations Command, the CIA included, is reliant on intelligence coming afterwards that confirms that who they were targeting was killed in the strike, or that they weren’t killed in that strike.”

“The people who defend drones, and the way they are used, say they protect American lives by not putting them in harm’s way,” he says in the film. “What they really do is embolden decision makers because there is no threat, there is no immediate consequence. They can do this strike. They can potentially kill this

person they are so desperate to eliminate because of how potentially dangerous they could be to the U.S. But if it just so happens that they don't kill that person, or some other people involved in the strike get killed as well, there are no consequences for it. When it comes to high-value targets, [in] every mission you go after one person at a time, but anybody else killed in that strike is blankly assumed to be an associate of the targeted individual. So as long as they can reasonably identify that all of the people in the field view of the camera are military-aged males, meaning anybody who is believed to be age 16 or older, they are a legitimate target under the rules of engagement. If that strike occurs and kills all of them, they just say they got them all."

Drones, he says, make remote killing "easy and convenient."

On August 8, 2014, the FBI raided Hale's home. It was his last day of work for the private contractor. Two FBI agents, one male and one female, shoved their badges in his face when he opened the door. About two dozen agents, pistols drawn, many wearing body armor, followed behind. They photographed and ransacked every room. They confiscated all his electronics, including his phone.

He spent the next five years in limbo. He struggled to find work, fought off depression and contemplated suicide. In 2019, the Trump administration indicted Hale on four counts of violating the Espionage Act and one count of theft of government property. As part of a plea deal, he pled guilty to one count of violating the Espionage Act.

"I am here to answer for my own crimes and not that of another person," he said at his sentencing. "And it would appear that I am here today to answer for the crime of stealing papers, for which I expect to spend some portion of my life in prison. But what I am really here for is having stolen something that was never mine to take: precious human life. For which I was well-compensated and given a medal. I couldn't keep living in a world in which people pretended things weren't happening that were. My consequential decision to share classified information about the drone program with the public was a gesture not taken lightly, nor one I would have taken at all if I believed such a decision had the possibility of harming anyone but myself. I acted not for the sake of self-aggrandizement but that I might someday humbly ask forgiveness."

I know a few Daniel Hales. They made my most important reporting possible. They enabled truths to be told. They held the powerful accountable. They gave a voice to the victims. They informed the public. They called for the rule of law.

I sit across from Hale and wonder if this is the end, if he, and others like him, will be completely silenced.

Hale's imprisonment is a microcosm of the vast gulag being constructed for all of us.

31 Jul - Condemn the FBI raids

On the morning of Friday, July 29th, the FBI conducted raids at multiple locations, including the Uhuru House in St. Petersburg, Florida, the private residence of Omali Yeshitela in St. Louis, Missouri, as well as the Uhuru Solidarity Center, also in St. Louis.

MORE:

The FBI employed flashbang grenades and handcuffed Yeshitela and his wife while the house was raided. The FBI says that the raids are connected to the federal indictment of a Russian man, Aleksandr Ionov, alleging that he has been working to spread "Russian propaganda" in the United States.

Many organizations now unequivocally condemn these raids, opposing all efforts by the U.S. government to target activists in any progressive movement in this country, and calling for an end to investigations, political harassment, and threats against activists and our movements.

The DOJ is alleging that those raided collaborated with a "Russian asset" to spread "Russian propaganda." At a time when the U.S. is engaged in a proxy war with Russia in the Ukraine, these raids have all the makings of a witch hunt. All progressive people should oppose any attempt by the FBI and police to attack people's movements and organizations. We must always be vigilant about defending our democratic rights to organize and speak out against injustice - including communicating with activists in other countries and building international solidarity. It should also be said this repression come in the context of upsurge of struggle in the Black community.

We know from experience how importance resistance to repression is. On September 24, 2010 the FBI raided seven homes of anti-war activists and the office of the Twin Cities Anti-War committee. Twenty-three activists were subpoenaed to a Chicago-based grand jury that claimed to be investigating "material support for terrorism." As time went on, the FBI continued their attack on anti-war and international solidarity activists by targeting important veterans of the movement who worked with the Anti-war 23, including Chicano activist Carlos Montes in Los Angeles and Palestinian organizer Rasma Odeh in Chicago. A national defense campaign defeated most of these attacks.

All those active in the movements for peace and justice should use this moment as a reminder to never speak with agents of the federal government prying into your activism or the activism of others. "I have nothing to say, please speak with my lawyer," are all that need to be said. If you are being taken into custody, all you are required by law to do is confirm your name and tell them that you would like to speak with your lawyer. If federal or local agents show up at your home or organizing office, do not let them in without a warrant, and if they have a warrant, inspect the details of the warrant closely - if any detail is incorrect, such as the spelling of a name or address, point out the error and do not permit entry onto the premises.

Don't talk to the FBI!

1 Aug - LORE IS COMING HOME

We are thrilled to announce that Lore will be home no later than the end of this year.

MORE:

Thank you all for contributing in so many different and meaningful ways to make this happen. This could not have happened without each and every one of you holding Lore in the light for more than two years of darkness and uncertainty. The work to make Lore, her family, and her community whole again will continue, but this is a time to look forward to that work with gratitude and hope.

On Thursday, July 28, Senior Judge R. Barclay Surrick of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania sentenced Lore to serve 30 months in prison, followed by two years of supervised release (aka - probation), and to pay restitution for two counts of civil disorder (18 U.S. Code § 23). Because Lore has already served over 25 months at FDC Philadelphia, and with credit for good behavior that she has earned during that time, this ruling means that Lore could be released from detention as early as this fall 2022. We will let you know when we have a firm date for that release. It will be a time for great celebration with Lore, her family, and community.

Judge Surrick's sentence falls far below the four years sought by government prosecutors and even below the minimum time suggested by federal guidelines for Lore's charges. His decision was informed by 50 letters of support from Lore's community, witness testimony to Lore's life and character, an impassioned defense by her attorneys, and ultimately by a stirring allocution statement by Lore that brought many of her 40 supporters attending in the gallery to tears.

Earlier this year, Lore entered into a plea agreement with the government that would reduce her charges significantly, from arson charges that carried mandatory minimum sentences of seven years each. In a 2021 report, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability &

Responsibility (CLEAR) project at the City University of New York called Lore's charges a shocking example of prosecutorial overreach to disrupt and suppress the movement against police violence. We will continue to work in solidarity with others facing charges and repression from the summer of 2020.

We are profoundly grateful to Lore's attorneys Paul J. Hetznecker and Marni Jo Snyder, to the 700+ donors who raised funds for Lore's defense and well-being, and to the countless people who wrote letters of solidarity and support to sustain Lore during this excruciating ordeal.

While we are taking this as a win and allowing ourselves to breathe and celebrate, support needs are not over. Lore and her family and community will need support to raise funds for the restitution she is required to pay which exceeds \$96,000. We will be sending updates and starting a fundraising blast for that in the near future. Additionally, please continue to share and donate to Lore's commissary fund via PayPal, Venmo, and Cashapp, send letters and photos, and support our peers in ending the persecution of activists and community builders. In her statement to the judge, Lore observed that prisoners like her were all capable of tremendous growth if just given a little support. She gets that support from you. Inside the FDC, she has quickly become an advocate for other incarcerated women and we look forward to her leadership in their support for years to come.

3 Aug - Freedom for Political Prisoners in Colombia

The following is a fundraising call for the hundreds of political prisoners from the 2021 uprising in Colombia, initiated by a collective of groups in the so-called U.S. and Colombia. Donate at gofundme.com/f/freedom-for-political-prisoners-in-colombia

MORE:

Changes are afoot in Colombia, and the inauguration of President Gustavo Petro and Vice President Francia Marquez on August 7 marks an important shift away from decades of right-wing rule.

However, more than 300 people accused of participating in the 2021 uprising remain locked up and/or are facing harsh sentences on trumped-up charges. The months-long uprising played a huge role in creating the conditions for the election of Petro and Marquez by exposing the failures of neoliberal capitalism and the determination of people to resist state violence.

We founded the Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective to support them.

Background:

In April 2021, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Colombia to demand change. They rejected decades of state violence and capitalist reforms that deepened inequality. Over the course of three months, the largest uprising in Colombian history spread to over 800 municipalities throughout the country. The demonstrators fed one another, provided free health care, opened libraries, toppled colonial monuments, and held concerts at the newly formed Resistance Points behind the barricades.

The state responded to this popular expression of freedom with brutal force. The numbers cannot account for the totality of the violence, but they do provide a haunting insight into the scale:

More than 40 people were murdered by state forces.

More than 100 people were forcibly disappeared.

More than 25 people were subjected to sexual violence by police forces.

Thousands more were injured.

It bears repeating that the United States government has provided Colombia with approximately \$11 billion in primarily military aid over the course of the last 25 years.

Even after the activity on the streets faded, the state continued to persecute and prosecute the people it believed to be involved in the demonstrations. Authorities are trying to discourage future resistance

movements by condemning the participants in the 2021 uprising to long sentences. The dismal conditions and overcrowding in Colombia's prisons aggravate this explicit form of intimidation and repression. For example, on May 31, 2022, a prison fire in Tulua (Valle del Cauca) killed over 50 people, including one political prisoner from the uprising.

Our Work:

We formed the Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective to struggle for the freedom of all political prisoners from the uprising, and we need your support!

The money raised from this campaign will directly support political prisoners from the Resistance Points in Cali – the epicenter of the uprising.

The funds will be used for the following items:

- Legal fees associated with the pro bono defense of political prisoners of the uprising in Cali;
- Humanitarian support for the families of the political prisoners;
- Commissary for incarcerated political prisoners.

To highlight one of the cases, Carolina Montaña Cuero is a political prisoner. She is a black mother and nurse in her early 20s. Throughout the uprising, she was a spokesperson at the Paso del Aguante Resistance Point and struggled to advocate for her community. She is currently facing a fifty-year prison sentence based on false claims that she murdered a police officer, and her trial is quickly approaching. Despite maintaining her innocence, she has been held in pre-trial detention since October 2021. Like Carolina, five other people from the Paso del Aguante Resistance Point face similar charges for the same crime.

Our campaign is based on more than a decade of collaboration with social movements in the region. We are working directly with pro bono lawyers, resistance points, and local organizations.

The Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective consists of the following organizations and collectives:

In the United States:

- Black Alliance for Peace
- National Lawyers' Guild – San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
- Woodbine

In Colombia:

- Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
- Punto de Resistencia del Paso del Aguante
- Trabajo y Justicia – Grupo Jurídico, Cali Colombia

4 Aug - Letter for the International Week of Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners

The following was written by imprisoned anarchist political prisoner Toby Shone for the international week of solidarity with anarchist prisoners, from August 23rd-30th.

MORE:

“Does this rising generation know that those who inaugurated the 8 hour day were put to death at the command of Capital?”

–Lucy Parsons, The Haymarket Martyrs, November 1926

“Although we are not reformists, the struggle to obtain improvements in one's immediate situation (wages, housing, health, education, occupations etc) sees the anarchists present, but they do not see these struggles as ends in themselves. They push the exploited towards this form of struggle so that they can develop the elements of self-organisation and refusal of the delegate which are indispensable in order to develop direct action at all other levels.”

–Alfredo M. Bonanno, What are Anarchists?

Despite being in prison, news occasionally reaches me of the many repressive operations and terrible circumstances that our comrades are confronting. That's why I am in agreement with the proposal once again put forward by the Anarchist Black Cross for a week of solidarity at the end of August. This date is chosen to mark the State murder of anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. We cannot give in to resignation or become complacent in these times. It is more important than ever to explain and make accessible the anarchist analysis and to put it into practice immediately.

Anarchism is internationalism, self-management, mutual aid, solidarity, and direct action: incisive, voracious and alive. That's why our spaces are raided and evicted, our publications seized, our communities hunted, beaten, imprisoned and killed around the world.

During my interrogations, the Counter-Terror cops at one point focused on the International Week of Solidarity with anarchist prisoners, accusing this event of supporting terrorism, glorifying terrorism. That's because part of their strategy is to try to illegalise the Anarchist Black Cross. Their aim is to destroy all solidarity and counter-information structures which spread information about and provide material support for the legal cases of anarchist comrades who are locked up.

Fast forward to June 11th and I received an unwelcome visit from a cop of the South-West Counter-Terror Unit attached to the National Security Division, accompanied by a probation officer of the same. They informed me that despite being found "Not Guilty" of terrorism charges, I would be released under counter-terror restrictions and monitoring when I am due for conditional liberty in December. These restrictions include demands more far-reaching and draconian than the "Serious Organised Crime Prevention Order" that was defeated in Bristol Crown Court on May 6th. These restrictions are explicitly political and aim to prevent me from attending meetings, going on demonstrations and having contact with my comrades, close ones and the counter-culture. All in the name of "Anti-Extremism". The regime demands that I am locked up in a secure hostel – a micro-open prison which is in a city I have no links with. Not once did these servants mention the reason I am incarcerated because at this point it simply does not matter as this is a repressive move against the anarchist ideas and nothing more. It is obvious that having failed to obtain the verdict they desired in my trial, having failed to impose the SOCPO, they now try to re-state their case through a manipulation of my licence restrictions. I am to be punished for my anarchist perspectives and the "fact" of their allegations. Their real aim is to return me back to prison as soon as they can under any pretext and open up the anarchist movement to their "anti-extremist, anti-terror" programs. For those arrested in the future on demonstrations or during direct action, this classification of "left-wing extremism" can therefore be applied even easier. We live in the times that George Orwell warned us of. The answer to this must come from the revolutionary movement itself, not only in terms of a rejection of this repressive strategy, but also in the acceleration of our techniques and organisation. To finish this dreary and legalistic update about my situation, that is the reason why I support the call by the ABC for the International Solidarity Week and not only. I finish with a promise sent on wings of black to all imprisoned anarchists around the world and to those who are free.

I DO NOT FORGET.

A COMPASSIONATE EMBRACE TO ALL COMRADES IN SPAIN, ITALY, GREECE, IRELAND, FINLAND, SWEDEN, HOLLAND, HUNGARY, FRANCE, PORTUGAL, AUSTRIA, GERMANY, RUSSIA, BELARUS, UKRAINE, CHILE, ARGENTINA, MEXICO, CUBA, BRAZIL, PERU, INDONESIA, PHILLIPINES, HONG KONG, MALAYSIA, THAILAND, MYANMAR, CHINA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, USA, SYRIA. IRAQ, IRAN, KURDISTAN, TURKEY, EGYPT AND ANTARCTICA. EVERYWHERE ON PLANET EARTH...

*You'll find me there
Where the night cats play
Without masters or slaves
Under starry skies*

*The sun will rise
“in chaos, there is fertility”
–Anais Nin*

4 Aug - Update on the Legal Situation of Fidencio Aldama

A legal update regarding Indigenous Yaqui political prisoner Fidencio Aldama.

MORE:

On October 20, 2020, an appeal was filed in the Third Collegiate Court in Criminal and Administrative Affairs of the Fifth Circuit of the State of Sonora, against Fidencio Aldama’s conviction, which was originally issued by the Second Mixed Judicial Court of the State of Sonora. This appeal was presented to the Magistrate Luz Elba de la Torre Orozco on August 12, 2021, who was tasked with drafting a ruling which could potentially free Fidencio Aldama. This ruling was issued on June 17, 2022.

The resolution was not favorable to Fidencio. The Appellate Court ordered the vacation of his original sentence issued on October 19, 2019, but upheld his conviction and ordered the issuing of a new sentence. The ruling states that when the new sentence is dictated, the court cannot hold Fidencio’s age against him when establishing his degree of guilt. Practically, this means that Fidencio’s sentence cannot be increased, but could possibly be decreased. This resolution is pending.

One year and nine months have passed since Fidencio Aldama’s appeal was filed. Nearly two years waiting for a resolution which could have given him his freedom which was unjustly taken from him. Yet, the Appeals Court ruled that Fidencio committed the crime and that he is responsible for voluntary manslaughter. The ruling does state, however, that the degree of guilt must be reevaluated. This means that the court will have to decide whether to lessen the sentence, possibly to the minimum of eight years, or reaffirm the sentence of fifteen years and six months in prison.

The legal pathways are running out but the rage and solidarity which drives the struggle for his freedom encourages us to continue. In the following days we will be sharing the court’s decision regarding Fidencio’s new sentence, and we will be tracing a new route in the struggle for his freedom.

5 Aug - Albert Woodfox Dies of COVID; Loved Ones Remember the Life & Legacy of Famed Political Prisoner

Albert Woodfox, who was held in solitary confinement longer than any prisoner in U.S. history, has died at the age of 75 due to complications tied to COVID-19.

MORE:

via Democracy Now!

Watch the full episode at democracynow.org/shows/2022/8/5

The former Black Panther and political prisoner won his freedom six years ago after surviving nearly 44 years in solitary over a wrongful murder conviction of a prison guard. Fellow imprisoned Panthers Herman Wallace and Robert King were also falsely accused of prison murders, and they collectively became known as the Angola 3. *Democracy Now!* interviewed Albert Woodfox in his first live TV interview just three days after his 2016 release, and multiple times afterward. “I’m just trying to learn how to be free,” Woodfox said. “I’ve been locked up so long in a prison within a prison.” Woodfox went on to write his memoir, “Solitary,” and continued to fight for prison reform after his release.

7 Aug - Get Chapter 1 of FRAMED For Free!

Michael Richardson has decided to share, for free, his book FRAMED about the Omaha Two political prisoners, Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Eyen Mondo we Langa [David Rice].

MORE:

Richardson will be releasing the chapters as weekly installments and chapter 1 is now available:
tiny.cc/FRAMED_Ch1

10 Aug - NYC Vigil for Brandon Rodriguez

WHAT: Vigil

WHEN: 10:00am, Wednesday August 10th

WHERE: NYC City Hall (Broadway entrance)

COST: FREE

MORE:

On the one-year anniversary of Brandon's passing, please join his family, the Jails Action Coalition, #HALTsolitary Campaign, and other allied community members for a vigil to honor Brandon and demand the City decarcerate and end solitary confinement. Thank you for joining and encouraging others to join!

11 Aug - Care Assembly

WHAT: Assembly

WHEN: 6:00pm, Thursday, August 11th

WHERE: TBA, anarchism.nyc for updated information

COST: FREE

MORE:

The Care Assembly is a space for requesting and offering mutual aid, which includes some political education and training of some kind. Someone will prepare some information and hold space for sharing knowledge about a topic (reproductive justice has been important lately so someone will do that again) and someone will be leading community & self-defense fight training. FYI this event is being planned in English.

SCHEDULE

6-6:45 pm: Political Education: Reproductive Justice

6:45-7:30 pm: Political Education: Mutual Aid & explanation of the care exchange

7:30-8:30 pm: Food and Care exchange

8:30-9:30 pm: Fight Training

18 Sept - Running Down the Walls 2022

It's coming!!! Donate at paypal.me/nycabc or via venmo using the app (@nycabc) or venmo.com/nycabc

MORE:

WHAT: Running Down the Walls – 5k Run/Walk/Jog/Bike/Hang

WHEN: 2:00-7:00pm, Sunday, September 18th, 2022

WHERE: Prospect Park– Lincoln Road/East Lake Drive, east of the Terrace Bridge (see the below map for exact location)

COST: \$10 registration, participants encouraged to get sponsors (includes vegan BBQ afterwards, observing COVID precautions for serving!) Donate at <https://venmo.com/nycabc>

NYC Anarchist Black Cross (NYC ABC) is excited to announce Running Down the Walls 2022! After making the difficult decision to not host RDTW in person in 2020, we are looking very forward to gathering as a community. Last year, we had an amazing time and a successful fundraiser. Please stay tuned to our website, sign up for our newsletter, and follow us on twitter (@nycabc) or instagram (also @nycabc) for updates.

Every year, prisoners and supporters of political prisoners organize solidarity events with Running Down the Walls. In previous years, we've had runs in Albuquerque (NM), Arcata (CA), Ashland (OR), Bellefonte (PA), Boston (MA), Buffalo (NY), Chico (CA), Denver (CO), Elmore (AL), Inez (KY), Los Angeles (CA),

Marion (IL), Minneapolis (MN) New York (NY), USP Navosta (TX), Pelican Bay (CA), Phoenix (AZ), Tucson (AZ), Seattle (WA), and Toronto, Ontario. This year we hope to expand the amount of runs in prisons and other cities, as well as increase the amount of funds raised for community projects. NYC ABC's goal with this year's run is \$4,500. You can donate online by going to paypal.me/nycabc venmo.com/nycabc or on the venmo app (@nycabc)

This year's run will take place on Sunday, September 18th, 2022 at 2:00 pm in solidarity and conjunction with runs that will take place in cities and prison yards across the country at the same time. Stay after to enjoy a vegan BBQ, served taking every COVID precaution!

REGISTER AS, OR SPONSOR, A PARTICIPANT

To raise our goal of \$4,500 we need your support.

* *Promote* – print and distribute flyers to friends and local businesses, your doctor's office, laundromat, food co-op, wealthy benefactor, et cetera.

* *Run/walk/bike/roll in the 5k* – We need participants who can run/walk/bike/roll the 5k and are able to collect financial pledges to offer as donations to the run. Download the brochure, complete with registration and sponsor form right here.

* *Volunteer for the run* – We need folks who are willing to promote the run and bike the route as street medics.

* *Donate* online at venmo @nycabc

* *Donate to the run/sponsor a participant* – If you are not able to attend, but want to support this fundraising effort, please mail donations to:

NYC ABC

Post Office Box 110034

Brooklyn, New York 11211

Your donation of \$10 or more entitles you to the celebratory picnic after the event.

Each year, we split proceeds between the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Warchest Program and a local organization. This year, local funds are going to Roots Unbound (RU).

The Warchest Program:

The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) has initiated a program designed to send monthly checks to those Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War who have been receiving insufficient, little, or no financial support during their imprisonment. The Warchest program was initiated in November 1994. Its purpose is to collect monthly funds from groups and individual supporters, and send that money to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POW) via monthly checks. Over the last twenty five years, the ABCF warchest has dispensed almost \$200,000 to political prisoners. Currently, there are 17 imprisoned comrades who receive a monthly stipend as part of the program; they are Abdul Azeez, Dan Baker, Ed Poindexter, Eric King, Fidencio Aldama, Hanif Bey, Jamil Al-Amin, Joseph Bowen, Kamau Sadiki, Leonard Peltier, Malik Smith, Mutulu Shakur, Oso Blanco, Ronald Reed, Ruchell Magee, Veronza Bowers, and Xinachtli (FKA Alvaro Luna Hernandez).

For more information, visit abcf.net/warchest-program

Roots Unbound:

Roots Unbound (RU) is an abolitionist grassroots organization based in Brooklyn offering nature-based programming centered around food justice, therapeutic horticulture, and ecological disinvestment to people in the NYC area with a focus on supporting and uplifting people impacted by the carceral system. Abolition is liberation for all.

For more information, visit rootsunbound.org