



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for February 21<sup>st</sup>

#### **4 Feb - Who is Alfredo Cospito, and what is 41bis?**

*The following is a primer on the Italian state's repression of anarchist fighter Alfredo Cospito, who is currently engaging in a hunger strike in prison that has exceeded 100 days. Solidarity actions have taken place across the world, leading to the Italian state recently putting their embassies on alert. Alfredo's courage and commitment to his struggle is an inspiration, however, his health is in rapid decline, and support is urgently needed as he faces a fascist state regime which seeks to make an example of him.*

#### **MORE:**

via *IGD Worldwide*

#### **Why are Italian anarchists intensifying actions recently?**

On October 19<sup>th</sup> Alfredo Cospito, an Italian insurrectionary anarchist began a hunger strike against his conditions at Sassari prison on the island of Sardinia. It has now been over a hundred days, and as his medical condition worsens, protests against his treatment have become increasingly volatile. Recently, in the traditionally working-class area of Trastevere in Rome (currently experiencing rapid gentrification), the police fought in a series of skirmishes with protesters; in Turin a cell tower was lit on fire; while in Livorno, an envelope containing bullets and a threatening letter reading "if Alfredo Cospito dies judges will all be targets, two months without food, burn down the prisons", was sent to the editor of a newspaper. The reason for his strike goes back to April 2022 when, after six years of imprisonment among the general prison population, he was transferred to a '41-bis' regime, known also as a 'hard prison', that includes substantial restrictions on even the most basic of freedoms.

Exacerbating this has been the decision in December by the Italian courts to upgrade his sentence, from twenty years to life without parole. Although on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 he was moved to Opera prison in Milan in order to receive improved medical treatment, he continues to be kept in a 41-bis regime and faces an uncertain future.

The case has been the subject of growing public debate for several months now, much of it revolving around the question of the proportionality of Cospito's sentence, given he was found guilty six years ago of a crime that resulted in neither death nor injury. His hunger strike – one of the few forms of non-violent protest available to prisoners in his position – has renewed the attention paid to his story and to the use of extreme forms of detention with prisoners deemed 'highest risk', a category which most believe should not include Cospito.

#### **What is 41-bis?**

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the Surveillance Court in Rome rejected a complaint made by Cospito's lawyer, Flavio Rossi Albertini, against the application of 41-bis, meaning that its use was effectively approved without appeal for the next four years. The reason given by the Court was that 'ordinary detention status, even in a high-security prison, wouldn't be enough to adequately reduce the elevated risk of behaviours aimed at exercising, on the part of Alfredo Cospito, his role as leader of the group to which he belongs'.

41-bis was thus extended after the Court affirmed that there was a risk that Cospito would give orders to other members of his organisation, justifying hard prison, a form of detention usually reserved for prisoners convicted of involvement in organised crime, on the grounds that it would restrict his ability to communicate with the outside world.

The 41-bis regime involves a series of extremely restrictive measures, among which are: isolation from other prisoners; limits to time spent outside of your cell (only two hours, and this too in isolation); limited visits (only with family members, with a glass divider, and with no physical contact permitted), a permanently open observation window on your cell, and the denial of newspapers and books.

In Italy, 41-bis has long been the subject of heated debate, with the European Court of Human Rights ruling it a form of torture in 2019. Even within the political establishment many have begun to ask for its abolition, arguing it to be an anti-constitutional carceral tool, contrary to the goal of re-education supposedly at the heart of the penal system (Article 27 of the Italian Constitution states that any punishment must 'tend towards the re-education of the convict'). Others, however, continue to argue for its preservation as a tool of carceral power. It has a long history, tied to the period of revolutionary terrorism that shook Italy in the 1970s, but first took its current form in the shake up to the prison system that followed the violent attacks carried out by the Sicilian mafia in 1992. Declaring open war against the state, the mafia assassinated several members of the judiciary they viewed as a threat to their power, killing, among others, the investigating judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. The application of the 41-bis regime to Cospito therefore reflects the dubious idea, held by the judiciary, that his relationship with his comrades in the anarchist movement is comparable to that which pertaining between imprisoned mafia bosses and their subordinates outside.

### **Who is Alfredo Cospito?**

Cospito is 55 years old. While born in the seaside town of Pescara on Italy's Adriatic coast, before his arrest he was a long-time resident of Turin, where he lived with his partner and comrade Anna Beiamino (also in prison), running a tattoo parlour in the San Salvario area of the city. Both identify themselves with the FAI-FRI (Informal Anarchist Federation – International Revolutionary Front). This is not to be confused with the Italian Anarchist Federation, who also use the acronym FAI; whereas the Italian Anarchist Federation opposes violence as a tactic, the Informal Anarchist Federation is a proponent of armed struggle against the state, capitalism and Marxism, all three of which it considers propagators of oppressive authoritarianism. Since their foundation in 2003, the FAI-FRI has made links with groups in several other countries, including Greece, Spain, Indonesia, Russia, Mexico, and Argentina; attacks on infrastructure around Bristol between 2012-2014 – including that on a newly constructed police firearms training centre that was estimated to cause damage worth £18 million – have been attributed to an offshoot of the group.

The FAI-FRI is composed of a number of cells, all acting autonomously from one another and describing themselves as 'informal' to mark their opposition to both hierarchy and any membership model of organisation. Cospito's lawyer Rossi Albertini, while speaking to Radio Radicale, has said that 'in my opinion, the judges of the Surveillance Court haven't at all understood what is specific about the organisation they are attempting to prohibit, equating it incorrectly to a model of organised crime and hierarchical organisation, with its system of bosses and organisers, when not even the Court of Assizes, who first ruled – with many caveats – that the FAI-FRI was an organisation, claimed that Cospito was any sort of leader. It's an oxymoron, a contradiction, to think that a horizontal structure, as the same judges in Turin ruled it to be, could have a leader.'

In 2013 Cospito was condemned to ten years and eight months in prison for having shot Roberto Adinolfi, a manager of engineering firm Ansaldo, in the leg. Ansaldo is a major producer of fossil and nuclear power plants, and in a handwritten speech that he attempted to deliver during his trial, Cospito explained that he had carried out the attack as part of a struggle against the authoritarian 'technological society'. Already inside, he was then accused of having placed, sometime during the night between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2006, two explosive devices in front of the Carabinieri training college in Fossano, a town south of Turin in the province of Cuneo. The explosion resulted in neither deaths nor injuries. Both bombs, which exploded within half an hour of each other, had been made using a pressure cooker and a metal tube with 800 grams of explosive material inside.

At the subsequent trial in Turin the judges decided to define the FAI-FRI as a terrorist organisation, basing their decision on evidence that Rossi Albertini described as ‘a document that appears to be a set of minutes for a meeting of eight people taking stock of the recent actions of the Informal Anarchist Federation’. Cospito and Anna Beniamino were condemned to 20 and 16 years imprisonment, respectively, according to the terms of Article 422 of the Italian penal code: ‘Whoever [...] with the aim of murder carries out such acts as endanger the public safety will be punished, if their actions lead to the death of several persons, with life imprisonment. If they should cause the death of a single person; life imprisonment shall apply. In any other case no less than fifteen years of imprisonment shall apply.’

The judges, in their appeal ruling, wrote that it was only by chance that the attack had not injured anyone. The interval between the first and second bombs, according to the judges, ‘would have been more than enough time to ensure the presence of first responders with the emergency services’.

After his conviction Cospito was placed in a high-security prison for inmates convicted of crimes involving criminal conspiracy, and subjected to stricter surveillance along with certain other limitations, but was otherwise guaranteed basic rights and safeguards. Cospito could, for example, still write for anarchist publications, something which he continued to do. After six years however, in 2022, the Minister of Justice decided to transfer him to a 41-bis regime ‘without’, as Rossi Albertini explained, ‘any new evidence coming to light’.

At the time, Justice Minister Marta Cartabia justified the application of 41-bis to Cospito on the grounds of the ‘numerous messages that, during his detention, he has sent to recipients outside of the prison system; including documents addressed to his anarchist comrades, and designed explicitly to continue their struggle against domination, particularly through the violent tactics which they consider most effective’. However, even according to the version of the story put out by the Justice Ministry, Cospito did not send these messages in secret, but through texts published in anarchist magazines and periodicals. For this reason, according to Rossi Albertini, if the state had wished to limit the publication of these articles, it would have been sufficient simply to put stricter controls on his post or put in place a specific measure aimed at curtailing this activity.

‘Instead,’ says Rossi Albertini, ‘six years after the sentencing it was decided to place him under this new, more restrictive form of detention. Cospito was transferred from Terni prison, where he had previously been detained, to Sassari. He is the first anarchist with whom such a measure has been implemented. He defines himself as an anarcho-individualist, which is in further contradiction with the role of leader attributed to him’.

### **How can you be convicted for a massacre with no victims?**

The other reason that propelled Cospito into starting his hunger strike was the threat (now realised) that his sentence might be upgraded to life without parole, and without the option of any future reduction or change in sentence.

Again, to understand how this could even be a possibility, you have to understand the legal journey that Cospito has been on. For the Fossano attack, Cospito was condemned to twenty years in prison (a decision later confirmed by a court of appeal), on the basis of Article 422 of the penal code, for the crime of ‘common massacre’ (since the crime of ‘attempted massacre’ does not exist). On the request of the public prosecutor, however, in May the Court of Cassation decided that the crime for which Cospito should have been prosecuted was rather that of ‘political massacre’. Finding in particular that Article 285 of the penal code should have been applied to his case. This article declares that ‘whoever, with the aim of attacking the security of the state, commits an act directed at bringing about devastation, looting, or a massacre in the territory of the state or a part thereof shall be punished with life imprisonment.’

The difference between these two articles is more than simply formal: Article 285 requires that life imprisonment be applied even where the attack was victimless. Furthermore, the gravity of the crime makes

it more than likely that the sentence will be extended to life without parole, a punishment automatically applied to the most serious of crimes and one that excludes the possibility of receiving even the most basic of privileges within prison, (unless the person convicted subsequently decides to cooperate with the justice system, turn ‘pentiti’ as it is known).

Even stranger is that fact that in both the case of the Capaci and via d’Amelio assassinations (the former killing Falcone and four others, the latter Borsellino and five others), and before that in the case of the Bologna Station bombing of 1980 (attributed to the far right with the assistance of the Italian secret service, in which eighty members of the public died), Article 422 – ‘common massacre’ – was the article that the magistrature chose to apply. According to Rossi Albertini, it makes no sense that the Fossano attack, which led to neither death nor injury, should be treated as a more serious crime than any of these.

The Court of Cassation accepted the prosecutor’s request, however, referring the case to the Turin Court of Appeal. At the same time, the public prosecutor requested that Cospito be upgraded to a life sentence and placed under twenty-four-hour isolation for twelve months, and that his accomplice Anna Beniamino be handed an increased sentence of twenty-seven years and one month. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the Turin Court of Appeal in turn referred the case to the Constitutional Court in Rome, requesting they rule on whether – as the defence has long maintained – the relatively minor nature of Cospito’s crime might be considered a mitigating factor in sentencing.

Cospito, having been repeatedly charged with the same or similar offences, is theoretically unable to request any such readjustment of his sentence according to either mitigating or aggravating factors. And without such a readjustment, Cospito’s sentence will inevitably be life in prison, as requested by the public prosecutor. But Cospito’s lawyers have requested that the Constitutional Court to rule on whether preventing the assessment of mitigating factors, where the defendant is considered a ‘recidivist’, is in any way constitutional. And on this decision hangs the question of whether or not Cospito will receive a sentence of life without parole.

If Cospito’s hopes regarding his life sentence lie with the Constitutional Court, his removal from the 41-bis regime is a matter for the Court of Cassation. But, as Rossi Albertini has explained, ‘the time frame for this decision does not fit with the urgency of [Cospito’s] hunger strike’; that is, Cospito will most likely be forced to suspend the strike due to his failing health before his legal case moves forward, or will die before any decision is reached. There is also the technical possibility that the Justice Minister, Carlo Nordio (who got his start investigating the Red Brigades in the 1980s), could intervene, but this appears fairly remote given the extreme right-wing nature of the current government.

### **What happens next?**

By the end of November Cospito had already lost 22 kilos and was showing signs of declining health. Appearing at court in Turin to hear their decision on the change to his sentence, he said: ‘I’ve been portrayed as a butcher and it has even been said that I am an explosives expert. You can say what you like about me, but I’m not a hypocrite. I only committed one violent act: I shot a man in the leg in Genoa because I didn’t want to use explosives [against him]. As an anarchist, I have always taken responsibility for the things that I have done with honour. It is absurd that two attacks in the middle of the night, in deserted locations, that did not kill or injure, and could not have killed or injured anyone, can be considered a ‘political massacre’. In the future I plan to cast doubt on the idea that I am a butcher.’

For the last month the Italian anarchist movement has continued to protest in support of Alfredo Cospito, and yet more protests are expected in the coming days. In cities across the country graffiti has appeared calling for the abolition of 41-bis and for the freeing of Cospito and all other political prisoners. Protests, some heated, have taken place in Rome, Turin, Milan, Florence, Livorno and other major centres of the anarchist movement in the last few weeks. Criticism of Cospito’s treatment has also come from many people and organisations far removed from the anarchist movement. Indeed, his story is now on the front

page of most national newspapers, a point of heated discussion in parliament and on the radio, the threat of his nearing death putting ever greater pressure on the government to reform the 41-bis regime.

According to his lawyer, Cospito intends to go forward with his hunger strike even if it leads to ‘the most extreme consequences’. Cospito himself has said in court that ‘I will not give up, I will continue my hunger strike to the last breath in order to fight for the abolition of 41-bis and life without parole, and to make the world aware of these two repressive abominations.’

### **February 14<sup>th</sup> - Updates about the transfer of Alfredo Cospito to the San Paolo hospital** **Alfredo Cospito transferred from Opera prison to San Paolo hospital (Milan, February 11, 2023)**

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the 115<sup>th</sup> day of hunger strike against 41 bis prison regime and life imprisonment without possibility of parole, anarchist Alfredo Cospito was transferred from Opera prison (where he had been an imprisoned since January 30<sup>th</sup> in the Servizio di Assistenza Intensificata, SAI, Intensified Assistance Service) to the San Paolo hospital (also located in Milan), in one of the rooms reserved for prisoners on 41 bis in the prison medicine ward. The transfer was ordered by the Department of Penitentiary Administration following the indications of the doctors. The comrade, according to February 11<sup>th</sup>, weighs 71 kg (the starting weight at the beginning of the hunger strike was 115 kg) and is in extremely critical health condition. As reported by the doctor who examined the comrade in the morning: ‘he is at risk of cerebral oedema and potentially fatal cardiac arrhythmias’.

### **Regarding the prosecutor general’s request to overturn the 41 bis measure against Alfredo Cospito in view of the cassation hearing of February 24**

The Agnelli family’s [multi-industry business dynasty founded by Giovanni Agnelli, one of the original founders of the FIAT motor company which became Italy’s largest automobile manufacturer] newspapers (‘La Repubblica’ and ‘La Stampa’) revealed in this morning’s (February 12<sup>th</sup>) edition that the prosecutor general at the Court of Cassation had filed a request for the overturn of the 41 bis measure against Alfredo Cospito in view of the hearing on February 24<sup>th</sup> in Rome. This is undoubtedly good news, but it should not be overestimated. Naturally because as anarchists we have no faith in bourgeois justice, specifically because it is not uncommon for the cassation to take more radical decisions than those requested by the prosecution itself.

Finally, we cannot forget that Alfredo’s health situation is very serious and that February 24<sup>th</sup> may be too far away, which could turn out to be a terrible hoax.

We persevere in our claim for an immediate declassification of our comrade, convinced that any outcome will depend solely on the struggle to the last breath that Alfredo has put up and on the international solidarity movement that has been expressed.

### **4 Feb - Autopsy shows training center activist shot at least 13 times**

*Manuel 'Tortuguita' Terán's family calls for transparency from GBI after Atlanta shooting*

#### **MORE:**

by Tyler Estep (*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*)

An independent autopsy showed Manuel "Tortuguita" Terán — the activist killed last month near the site of Atlanta's planned public safety training center — was shot by police at least 13 times, attorneys for the family said.

Decatur-based civil rights attorneys Brian Spears and Jeff Filipovits plan to hold a press conference Monday morning. They and Teran's family are calling on the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to release more information about the incident, which they called "the first time any environmental activist in the United States has been killed by the government."

"Manny was a kind person who helped anyone who needed it. He was a pacifist," Teran's mother, Belkis Teran, said in a press release. "They say he shot a police officer. I do not believe it. I do not understand why they will not even privately explain to us what happened to our child."

According to the GBI, which is investigating the incident, Georgia state troopers conducting a Jan. 18 "clearing operation" near the training center site came across Teran and other activists camped in the woods. Teran is accused of shooting "without warning," wounding a trooper, before several of the injured officer's colleagues returned fire.

The GBI says it has tied the bullet that struck the trooper to a gun found at the scene, and provided documents showing Teran, 26, had purchased the same gun in Sept. 2020. There is no body camera footage of the shooting.

State troopers are generally not equipped with cameras.

Many activists, civil rights groups and local officials have called for an independent investigation of the shooting.

According to Friday's press release, Teran's family has asked the GBI to release "whatever audio and video exists of the incident or any other information that would help shed light on what happened."

"Any evidence, even if it is only an audio recording, will help the family piece together what happened on the morning of January 18<sup>th</sup>," Spears, a longtime civil rights attorney, said. "This information is critical, and it is being withheld."

### **5 Feb - Not One More Tyre Nichols**

*The following statement is endorsed by the membership of Black Rose Anarchist Federation / Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra.*

#### **MORE:**

On January 10, 2023, Tyre Nichols died from severe physical injuries, including a broken neck, sustained three days earlier at the hands, batons, pepper spray, and tasers of five Memphis, Tennessee police officers. As one of the lawyers for Tyre's family described it, Officers Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr, and Justin Smith treated him like "a human piñata" during a January 7 confrontation.

Tyre Deandre Nichols was born on June 5, 1993, in Sacramento, California. He was two years old when Stephon Clark was born at a nearby hospital. The two lived near each other for the entirety of Stephon's short life; Tyre left for Memphis shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic. These young fathers would face similar fates less than four years apart from each other: death at the hands of municipal police officers. Whereas Stephon died by gunshot, Tyre suffered what his city's police chief described as "perhaps worse" than the Los Angeles Police Department's infamous beating of Rodney King – another Sacramento, CA native – nearly seventeen years to the day preceding Stephon's death.

Nine months before he was murdered, Tyre joined 30,000 coworkers at FedEx, one of Memphis's leading employers. He started working there eight years after fellow workers at one of his employer's top national competitors, United Parcel Service, refused to ship law enforcement equipment to Missouri in solidarity with the nationwide uprising against police brutality after Michael Brown was gunned down in Ferguson.

After police murders like these, widespread protests, die-ins, riots, and other street actions often take the nation to demand justice for the slain. These uprisings express – and generate – collective anger, antipathy, and opposition to the most discrete instances of racist state violence. Recently, these protests have raised the calls to defund, disarm, and dismantle their police departments and find alternative social service and

safety systems. All the while, mainstream liberal talking heads proclaim “a moment of racial reckoning” that may finally curb the next Rodney. The next Michael. The next Stephon. The next Breonna. The next George.

And still, the next Tyre loses his life as budgets for police departments grow across the country after the political elite’s foremost leaders call for more money to hire more and “retrain” existing law enforcement officers. He becomes the next in a long line of people murdered by police: in 2022, these agents of the state killed a record-setting 1,186 people, over a quarter of which were Black – twice their share of the US population.

Thus, concrete experiences, from the long, hot summer of 1967 to the 1992 LA riots to the 2020 George Floyd rebellion, show that these righteous, empowering popular upswells tend to momentarily flare before dissipating from and being co-opted and repressed off the streets with neither the systemic transformation so many desperately crave nor the sustained organization needed to build power to bring it into reality.

Since recordings of the officers brutally arresting Tyre were released Friday evening, minimal street actions have materialized in Memphis and elsewhere. State administrators and politicians may have learned lessons from 2020’s George Floyd rebellion that helped curb collective discontent so far. Local city council members proclaimed they wanted to “send a very strong message” that “misconduct” would face reproach when they fired two EMTs who responded to Tyre, following the firing of the five officers. Similarly, Memphis Police Raines Precinct Commander Colonel Dennis McNeil “personally apologize[d]” for his officers’ actions, claiming they were “not indicative of the entire police department.” Even the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation – the same institution that surveilled and harassed movements and individual activists for years, including Martin Luther King, Jr., and declared Black Lives Matter a movement of “Black Identity Extremists” – claimed he was “appalled” with the five Memphis officers’ behavior upon opening an investigation into their actions. Alongside public denunciations and workplace removals, the Shelby County District Attorney charged the officers with a litany of crimes, including second-degree murder, before Friday’s footage release. Typical public demands for minimal accountability seem to have been heeded early and effectively before people across the country had the time to absorb another digitally-recorded lynching.

Whether or not masses of people rise in revolt, the systems that sprout racist state violence will likely stay in place, reinforced and re-legitimated in new ways. How, then, might we dismantle these interlocking systems of domination that disproportionately maim, murder, and cage Black people? How do we transcend the cycle of police brutality → street demonstrations → promises of “accountability,” “healing,” and “change” → movement demobilization → state entrenchment?

Movement activists in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Atlanta, Georgia offer some lessons.

After Derek Chauvin squeezed the life out of George Floyd, Minneapolis’s eruption was best emblemized with the immolation of the Third Precinct police headquarters. Although the building’s barren shell symbolizes the city council’s lack of institutional progress to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department promised in the throes of the uprising, neighborhood-based organizational structures became important prefigurations of a world without police.

When stores burned and white supremacists menaced residents in the uprising’s early days, local organizers helped coordinate block-by-block organizing to defend their communities and continue access to food, baby supplies, and other necessities. Neighbors exchanged phone numbers and email addresses, created lists of resources they could share between themselves, and helped meet each other’s needs. These organizing structures also spurred cross-neighborhood working groups like an “ad hoc fire squad” composed of community members that would quickly respond to nearby emergencies. Although these kinds of organizations have ebbed like the rebellion, many of their participants involved themselves and

their neighbors in citywide campaigns to transform policing that have won significant – but not electorally significant – support.

In Georgia, a coalition of environmental, anti-carceral, and other community activists have coalesced with local residents for the last two years to stop Atlanta authorities from replacing a section of the Weelannee Forest with a multimillion dollar police training facility christened “Cop City.” Such efforts aim to not only preserve the natural environment and a rich ecosystem but also to prevent state forces from further encroaching into – and possibly taking more of – their lives. Since 2013, state agents in the city have killed forty-eight people, three out of every four of whom were Black.

Although the state has launched a campaign of fear and intimidation against them by murdering campaign participant Manuel “Tortuguita” Paez Teran and slamming over a dozen activists with trumped-up “domestic terrorism” charges, movement organizers have answered the repression they’ve faced with escalating tactics. From hosting public demonstrations downtown to encouraging community members to flood city council comments denouncing its plans to targeted property destruction and living in makeshift treetop shelters that inhibit heavy machinery from knocking them down, the campaign shows few signs of slowing. Calls to “Stop Cop City” and “Defend the Atlanta Forest” have spread as far and quickly as the movement’s hashtags: over 2,000 organizations and individuals from around the world have signed the movement’s statement of solidarity, along with call-in campaigns to demand the project’s investors to pull their funding from it.

Atlanta’s forest defenders make clear that it is entirely possible to slow – and even push back – the seemingly ever-expanding arms of the state, and Minneapolis’s block-by-block organizing envisioned, if momentarily, how a cop-free and more communal world could be made. Both target earlier stages in the precipitating chain that culminates in police brutality: Atlanta at the heart of the state’s repressive expansion, Minneapolis at the intervening period when authorities might be called to “restore order.” And both demonstrate that systems of domination will not be toppled in one or even several explosive event(s), but require strategic, sustained, and responsive tactics and visions by many people to make long-term impacts.

However, masses of people respond to published video of Tyre’s murder, stopping future ones requires ongoing organizing for popular power that can defend against, offensively strike, and ultimately supplant these systems from the ground-up. To do so, we must bring our full selves that we momentarily become in the streets – with our disgust and disdain for the systems and purveyors of violence, the joy and jubilation for a different world, and everything in between – back to the places where we live, work, play, and care, in our day-to-day lives.

In memory of Tyre Nichols and all others lost, in struggle with all who remain.

## **5 Feb - It's 2023...Please Support our Freedom Fighters**

*From National Jericho to you and yours, we wish you a healthy, safe, productive & satisfying new year.*

### **MORE:**

Yes, it is a new year, but things still seem the same in most aspects. Police brutality, mass incarceration, oppression, and our Political Prisoners are still behind usa gulags.

Still...We have hope...our Political Prisoners have hope....

Can you Imagine?

As we all look out for each other as families, comrades, communities, organizations on the outside, we also need to keep our Political Prisoners on the inside of those callous prison walls in our minds and thoughts, and make conscious efforts to assist in their needs and fight for their freedom.

Our Political Prisoners always send their love and regards to us—the people—yet, we can never repay them for the ultimate sacrifices they have made for us as Freedom Fighters.

Let us reflect love and sacrifice in our efforts to be there for our Elders/Political Prisoners. Together, let us continue to fight to keep them safe and healthy, and fight to bring them home

where they belong—with their families and community. As Huey P Newton said, "I have the people behind me and the people are my strength."

We encourage you to donate to the Jericho Movement to Assist and help Free OUR Political Prisoners.

Jericho uniquely:

- Actively maintains direct connection with each political prisoner by visiting and writing them;
- Provides financial assistance to them and their families as needed;
- Advocates for their increasing medical needs, particularly as everyone gets older;
- Works on amnesty campaigns – legal and political;
- Educates people and communities across the United States with the strategic objective of building a mass movement to free all political prisoners, stop political incarcerations, end mass incarcerations, and close down special housing and isolation units;
- Builds working alliances and coalitions with other like-minded people and organizations;
- Establishes open communication with Political Prisoners so they have a direct say in the direction of the organization

We are seeking to provide assistance to our Political Prisoners through healthy food packages, increased access to phone calls to reduce feelings of isolation, increased letter writing materials, prison visits, ongoing campaigns, assisting with legal fees for those filing or going to court hearings, as well as continuing to assist our Political Prisoners who have recently been released.

### **6 Feb - Attack in Memory of the Base in Brooklyn**

*The storefront of Altitude Cannabis Club in Brooklyn, NY was attacked with three of its windows shattered and a message scrawled on its door.*

#### **MORE:**

Anonymously submitted via *Abolition Media*

The building that Altitude is located at is the former address of the Base, an anarchist political space that many of us revolutionaries held near and dear to our hearts and gave us a space to build community, make friends and comrades, sharpen our political knowledge, debate with others, and grow into the thorns in the side of the state and capitalism that we are today.

One thing that set the Base apart from other spaces in the city, which are run by fossilized Marcyites, hipster anarcho liberals, or bourgeois leftists of various shades, is the uncompromising focus on anti-imperialism, old school anti-capitalist radicalism, support for political prisoners, regardless of tendency, and promoting anarchism through the lens of the history of the struggle against slavery and colonialism.

The Base was the only leftist space with a preponderance of working-class people in the collective or frequenting the space, many of whom were people of color, and not despite this, but because of this, they were always against liberal identity politics; which in essence is the politics of white university culture.

It was the only space that always welcomed neighborhood people and homeless folks without judgment, treated people as equals and assisted with day-to-day struggles.

Unlike other political spaces, the Base cared about providing us a constructive space, keeping bad actors and abusive personalities out, and became the space where those of us fed up with yuppie or cult run spaces and activist groups came to get to know each other and formulate our ideas and plans for the future.

When the landlords evicted the Base and Altitude took over, it was obvious that Altitude probably had no hand in the eviction process. However, the stark contrast of what used to be and what now is was very symbolic.

An overpriced, gentrified weed club where yuppies go to waste their money instead of supporting locals, staffed by despicable hippies and hipsters.

And so in the dead of night we struck back. A last hurrah to the best anarchist space on the east coast. The space may be gone, but the ideas and bonds that were built and expanded upon there will never be broken until we all take our last dying breaths.

We will fight to continue the legacy they aimed to promote and will continue struggling against all that oppresses us.

Death to the state and capital!

US and NATO out of everywhere!

Death to every tyrant and oppressor whether big or small! And may all the landlords and the gentrifiers who sustain them be one day robbed of their ill-gotten wealth and property and may it be distributed to the working class.

For revolution, we march onwards!

### **6 Feb - Call to Freedom for Native American Artist Leonard Peltier**

*Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup> Begins the 48<sup>th</sup> year of wrongful imprisonment for Native American artist Leonard Peltier who remains behind bars for a crime everyone knows he did not commit.*

#### **MORE:**

Through CITYarts Kids for Justice program, we support the #FreeLeonardPeltier movement and we are sending out a CALL TO ACTION for you to join us!

"The entire investigation and prosecution of Leonard Peltier was an obstruction of justice. Enough is enough! Call for the release of Leonard Peltier. That is justice."

-former Federal District Court Chief Judge Kevin H. Sharp, Leonard Peltier's attorney

How can you help? Discover CITYarts produced and published book Leonard Peltier - Art Behind Bars: Dreams of Freedom, which presents 126 of Leonard Peltier's beautiful paintings, the fruits of his vivid imagination, that he created in prison, keeping him alive as he continues to serve two consecutive life sentences. All proceeds go toward Leonard restarting his creative future! Purchase at [cityarts.org/cityarts-products/leonard-peltier-art-behind-bars-dreams-of-freedom](http://cityarts.org/cityarts-products/leonard-peltier-art-behind-bars-dreams-of-freedom)

Leonard's artwork will be displayed on Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup> in NYC for all to see. Email [info@cityarts.org](mailto:info@cityarts.org) to RSVP. You will have the opportunity to sign a petition and write letters that will be sent to President Biden. Copies of Leonard Peltier - Art Behind Bars: Dreams of Freedom will be available for purchase.

Ruth Anna Buffalo, Native American, a former Rep. of North Dakota and long-time supporter of Leonard Peltier, is amplifying her voice at the DNC Executive Committee Meeting, to FREE Leonard Peltier Now!

"Hopes are high in 2023 that our President will long-last free Leonard Peltier. Mercy and compassion alone should free him today, and I hope all continue to ask for it!"

--Sheron Wyant-Leonard, author of *I Will*

Leonard's life was stolen, first at the age of 9 at American Indian schools and as an adult 47 years wrongfully imprisoned! Can you imagine ONE DAY to be incarcerated for a crime you didn't commit? Like Leonard's Peace Flag says, we are all in this together. This is how humanity stands together against adversity.

### **February 6<sup>th</sup> - Indigenous activist Leonard Peltier in plea for clemency after 47 years in jail**

by Nina Lakhani (*The Guardian*)

Leonard Peltier, the Indigenous rights activist held for almost five decades in maximum security for crimes he has always denied, has made a plea for clemency so that he can wander freely and hug his grandchildren for the first time.

In an exclusive interview with the *Guardian* to mark the start of his 48<sup>th</sup> year in prison, Peltier spoke about the pain of being deprived of his liberty, and his yearning to be reunited with his homeland and community after so many years.

"Being free to me means being able to breathe freely away from the many dangers I live under in maximum custody prison. Being free would mean I could walk over a mile straight. It would mean being able to hug my grandchildren and great-grandchildren," said Peltier, aged 78.

"I have been kept away from my family and only seen them a few times over the past 47 years. It is more than hard, especially when the kids write to me and tell me they want to see me and I cannot afford the cost of travel. If I was free I would build me a home on my tribal land, help build the economy of our nations and give a home to our homeless children," Peltier said in an interview conducted over email via one of his approved contacts.

Peltier, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribe and of Lakota and Dakota descent, was convicted of murdering two FBI agents during a shootout on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota in June 1975. Peltier was a leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM), an Indigenous civil rights movement founded in Minneapolis that was infiltrated and repressed by the FBI.

The 1977 murder trial – and subsequent parole hearings – were rife with irregularities and due process violations including evidence that the FBI had coerced witnesses, withheld and falsified evidence. Amnesty International, UN experts, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and the Rev Jesse Jackson are among those to have condemned his prolonged detention as arbitrary and politically motivated and called for his release.

Peltier, who is currently detained in Coleman, Florida, has spent 46 of the past 47 years in maximum security. Multiple recommendations to lower his prisoner classification, so that he can be transferred to a less restrictive prison closer to his family, have been rejected.

Life inside for Peltier has got even harder and lonelier since the start of the Covid pandemic, with frequent and unpredictable lockdowns, limited access to medical care and virtually no access to the phone, computers or the art room – where Peltier would spend much of his time painting and writing.

"This place is becoming a complete lockdown institution. I'm living in a 6x12 cell built for one person that I am forced to share, where we spend 24 hours a day during these frequent lockdowns. You're on guard every moment of the day ... I am not receiving the medical treatment that I need and I suffer a lot of pain from the illness that needs treatment. A lot of programs are being taken away, and other privileges which make it even more stressful," said Peltier, whose health and mobility have significantly deteriorated since he contracted Covid last year.

In 2022, UN experts called for Peltier's immediate release after concluding that his prolonged imprisonment amounted to arbitrary detention.

"Mr Peltier's detention has been prolonged by parole officials who have departed from guidelines and failed to follow regulations pertaining to his parole proceedings. This, in addition to the influence of the FBI over the case, is the reason why he remains in detention during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is a threat to his life," they said.

Last month, a former FBI agent close to the case accused the agency of harboring a vendetta against Peltier and called for his release. Peltier contacted the *Guardian* after Coleen Rowley's unprecedented intervention calling for a presidential pardon.

Rowley, the former legal counsel at the Minneapolis FBI office, which played a key role in policing tribal nations, told the *Guardian* that in the 1990s she helped ghostwrite an op-ed arguing against Peltier's release.

Peltier said: "I'm very disappointed that she was involved in creating false evidence and took this long for her to come forward. However, I am grateful now that she did decide to tell the truth ... I am hopeful that Biden will sign my clemency. But I am not sure there will be any difference.

Peltier's hopes have been raised and crushed by numerous US presidents, Democratic and Republican, including last-minute changes of heart by both Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, according to his attorneys. The status of his current clemency application is unclear.

On Monday, vigils calling for his release were held by his supporters across the country including in Sacramento, California, which his granddaughter Julie Richards will attend.

"Grandpa Leonard is an inspiration to me and so many others. He deserves to see the light outside prison walls of day, so he can get back and stand with the people, we need him," said Richards, an anti-pipeline and water activist on Pine Ridge reservation whose biological grandmother Geraldine High Wolf, a member of the AIM, who adopted Peltier as her brother.

Peltier has said that his political activism was driven by the racism and brutal poverty he experienced every day growing up on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and Fort Totten Sioux reservations in North Dakota, and living through the federal government's forced assimilation policies at boarding school.

Indigenous activism – and the political, cultural and legal landscape – have evolved since the AIM's heyday, but the pandemic exposed and exacerbated the housing, health, economic, food and water inequalities still faced by Indigenous Americans, shining the spotlight on the federal government's failure to abide by its treaty promises.

"Nothing has changed for me or my beliefs. I hear life is somewhat easier today with not so much hunger and open racism as when I was growing up, but we still have a ways to go until we are free from the concentration camps systems I grew up in. Although we have made many gains and won some victories in the courts, we are still fighting against the large corporations for the theft of our lands and minerals. Of course, any and all victories are great but the cost is high – as at Standing Rock when many were imprisoned."

Peltier has no option but to hope that this time the US government will grant him clemency despite the FBI's 47-year effort to block his freedom.

"Of course, I know from my own experiences that the justice system sucks in America, and for us natives has not changed much in that area. It's 2023 but it's still a very racist system," he said.

## **February 6<sup>th</sup> - 'Plant A Tree For Me': Leonard Peltier Reflects On Hitting 48 Years In Prison**

by Jennifer Bendery (*HuffPost*)

Monday marks 48 years in prison for Leonard Peltier, the Indigenous rights activist who the U.S. government put behind bars after a trial riddled with misconduct and lies — and who definitely doesn't belong there anymore.

The FBI and U.S. Attorney's Office made a fall guy out of Peltier, now 78, when they convicted him of murdering two FBI agents during a 1975 shootout on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They never had evidence that he murdered anyone, and the amount of wrongdoing that took place in his trial is mind-boggling: Government prosecutors hid exculpatory evidence. The FBI threatened and coerced witnesses into lying. Peltier was separated from his co-defendants, all of whom were acquitted on grounds of self-defense. A juror admitted she was racist against Native Americans on the second day of the trial but was allowed to remain on the panel.

Peltier has maintained his innocence for all of these years, even as it almost certainly prevented him from being paroled.

His decades-long parole process has been so problematic that United Nations legal experts last year made the unusual decision to revisit his case. Over the summer, they called on President Joe Biden to release Peltier immediately.

Their working group concluded in a damning 17-page legal opinion that between Peltier's advanced age, deteriorating health, frequent placement in solitary confinement and the difference between his time in prison compared to non-Native Americans convicted of similar offenses, "Mr. Peltier continues to be detained because he is Native American."

Peltier is still sitting in a Florida penitentiary despite all of these problems; despite pleas for his freedom by international human rights leaders including Pope Francis, Nelson Mandela and Coretta Scott King; despite nearly 50 years of concerts and letter-writing campaigns and petitions circulated by thousands of supporters, politicians, Indigenous leaders and celebrities urging his release. He uses a walker now. He is blind in one eye from a partial stroke. He has serious health concerns related to diabetes and an aortic aneurysm.

Why is he still in prison? The FBI simply doesn't want him to get out, ever, even as its stated argument for keeping him there is wildly outdated, misleading and flat-out wrong.

Biden, who has been a strong advocate for policies that lift up tribes and Native American communities, could unilaterally release Peltier if he wanted to. Two years into his presidency, though, he has stayed silent.

Asked Monday if Peltier is on Biden's radar and if he is considering granting him clemency, a White House spokesman referred to the last statement sent to *HuffPost* on this topic. *HuffPost* routinely asks the White House about Peltier but does not get a response.

The last time *HuffPost* remembers getting a response was in Feb. 2022, with this statement from a Biden spokesman: "We are aware of Mr. Peltier's request for a pardon and the outreach in support of his request. As many of you know, President Biden has a process for considering all requests for pardon or commutation, which is run through our White House Counsel's Office. I don't have more to share on Mr. Peltier's request at this time."

The Office of the Pardon Attorney, which reviews inmates' clemency petitions, does not respond to questions about the status of clemency petitions. A Monday email to this office triggered an auto-response that directed *HuffPost* to the office's website to search for information on the status of any inmate's

clemency petition. The status of Peltier's petition, which was filed more than a year and a half ago, simply says, "Pending."

Peltier had some thoughts to share Monday on the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his imprisonment.

"Living in here, year after year, day after day, week after week, plays on your concepts of time and your process of thought beyond what you can imagine," he said in a written message provided to *HuffPost*.

"We have had to live in a state of survival ever since Columbus landed," Peltier continued, referring to the country's treatment of Indigenous peoples. "There is nothing about my case, nothing about the Constitution, which is a treaty between the American people and the government, that warrants my continual imprisonment."

To his supporters, Peltier signed off his message with a request: "From my heart to yours, plant a tree for me."

### **7 Feb - Kamau Sadiki Medical Emergency**

*Kamau has since received the medication he requires, but only through outside agitation. Read how it went down below.*

#### **MORE:**

Kamau's daughter Ksisay expressed an EMERGENCY situation about her dad today. Kamau has not received his Blood Pressure Medication, Amlodipine, in four days!

Ksisay is very concerned and she asks everyone to contact the Augusta State Medical Prison Administrative Office to put pressure on the prison to provide Kamau the necessary blood pressure medication.

The Administrative Office phone number is 706.855.4700 and, again, the name of the Blood Pressure Medication is Amlodipine.

### **February 9<sup>th</sup> - Kamau Sadiki Has Received a Month's Supply of His Blood Pressure Medication!**

The Free Kamau Sadiki Campaign is happy to report that the call-in campaign was a success! Kamau's daughter Ksisay spoke with her father today and he confirmed that he has now received a month's supply of his high blood pressure medication.

Kamau also clarified that this is due to August State Medical Prison now having WellPath as their medical provider, and there was a delay of several days in everyone receiving their necessary medications.

### **7 Feb - Suspect of attempted Permian Highway Pipeline bombing sentenced**

*Below is a corporate news article, so please read it with a critical eye.*

#### **MORE:**

by Abigail Jones (KXAN)

A man was sentenced in federal court in Austin last week for attempting to damage or destroy part of the Permian Highway Pipeline in Hays County.

Ryan McKinney, 22, of Fort Worth, was sentenced to five years in prison after he attempted to detonate a device near a section of the pipeline on Jan. 26, 2022, according to a press release from the U.S. Department of Justice.

According to the release, McKinney "conducted extensive planning for the attack and deliberately chose the Permian Highway Pipeline as part of his ideological fight against capitalism and climate change."

McKinney turned himself in after the device failed to damage the pipeline.

“Despite this defendant’s failed attempt to cause destruction, his intent, as shown in his thorough planning, posed an irresponsible and very dangerous risk,” said U.S. Attorney Jaime Esparza of the Western District of Texas. “Our prosecution and the sentencing in this case make it clear that attacks on our nation’s critical infrastructure are unacceptable and will be met with the full force of the law.”

### **7 Feb - Newly released! Oso Blanco's latest book *The Blue Agave Revolution!***

*The Blue Agave Revolution: Poetry of The Blind Rebel* is a collaboration among radical author, indigenous freedom fighter and political prisoner Oso Blanco (aka Byron Shane Chubbuck, aka Robin The Hood) and Michael Novick--a Brooklyn-born veteran of SDS/Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, publisher of *Turning The Tide* journal, and all-around tireless anti-fascist--along with numerous contributors who have supported, and continue to support, Oso Blanco over the years spanning his imprisonment.

#### **MORE:**

A joint work of poetry and speculative/magical realist fiction that was the result of working over a period of many years with multiple people, *The Blue Agave Revolution: Poetry of the Blind Rebel* is also profusely illustrated with historical and contemporary photos and artwork by Oso Blanco and others. Its 300 pages contain tales of the historical Mexican Revolution of 1910-20, reports and analysis of the contemporary struggle for Indigenous sovereignty, freedom, and a better world, and imaginings of what future struggles may look like.

Imprisoned by the US government for expropriating funds from banks in support of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), Oso Blanco continues to use his art to fulfill his mission. At Oso Blanco's request, all funds from sale of the book will help fund The Children's Art Project in support of the children in Chiapas.

Copies will be available for purchase directly through the official support website soon! For now, to purchase a copy or to inquire about bulk orders, feel free to email his support crew at [info@freesosoblanco.org](mailto:info@freesosoblanco.org). Copies may also be purchased through our friends at Burning Books: [burningbooks.com](http://burningbooks.com)

### **8 Feb - Paper Mail Gave me Hope on Rikers Island. Don't Take it Away from Imprisoned People.**

*Former political prisoner David Campbell writes about being lucky enough to get a lot of mail while imprisoned on Rikers Island.*

#### **MORE:**

by David Campbell (*The Appeal*)

There was a ton of variety: Graph paper, notebook paper, and fingerpaintings from my friends’ toddler. Tiny, delicate pages from a Muji notebook, studded with a grid of little gray dots. Sky-blue stationery trimmed with an ornate, gleaming floral motif. Cream-colored sheets, almost cardstock-thick, that felt like wicker beneath my fingers. One friend sent me near-weekly vintage Halloween postcards with exquisite holographic stamps to match. Another friend sent a campy promotional scratch-and-sniff card for the 1981 John Waters film *Polyester*. I once got a piece of “junk mail” from the Arbor Day Foundation; I kept it just because I found its full-color high-definition photos of trees and woodlands so beautiful. I saved every letter I received, and took them home with me in a 33-gallon trash bag upon release. Because that is how much paper mail means to a prisoner. Its value is second only to a hug on a visit.

The New York City Department of Correction is currently seeking a “variance,” or permission not to meet certain minimum standards of care, from the Board of Correction, its nominally independent oversight

body, in order to eliminate nearly all paper mail for imprisoned people. Instead of distributing physical mail, nearly every card, letter, and postcard would be scanned by the for-profit corporation Securus and delivered on tablets. The tablets currently in use at Rikers were rolled out during my time there. The device, in its clear plastic shell reading “American Prison Data Systems,” had to be checked out from the guards in the morning and turned in to them at night. It is an implicit reminder of your inmate status.

Numerous studies covering everything from e-books to e-signatures have confirmed that people prefer paper texts. There is something about the physicality of paper that matters. When you’re a prisoner starved for stimuli, your senses are heightened, and these distinctions are so real they leap out of the envelope at you.

It is well known that strong ties with the outside world induce better recovery from incarceration and reduce recidivism. Paper mail, which may well be “the most common form of family contact,” is one of the most fundamental ways of keeping those ties strong. A letter’s tangibility is an essential link with the outside world, rather than a reinforcement of a person’s institutional identity.

When you are incarcerated, a physical letter is a small marvel, a message in a bottle, a reminder of who you are, where you came from, who still cares about you, and why you should stay out of trouble and come home soon.

In facilities that have implemented mail-scan policies, letters often come out blurry, poorly scanned, and barely legible. There are also serious privacy issues that mail digitization raises. And while the efficacy of paper mail bans is questionable, they indisputably leave prisoners angry, upset, and distressed. Assault rates are documented to rise when in-person visits are banned in jails and prisons, and I can confirm firsthand that when services are cut, tempers flare. If real mail is replaced with a pale copy of itself, increased violence at Rikers is all but assured.

I can also confirm firsthand that the vast majority of any prisoner’s time there is spent doing absolutely nothing, simply because there is nothing to do. The DOC could easily invest in more and better programming and health services to counter the boredom that drives many to drug-induced escapism and mental despair. There were a staggering 19 deaths in DOC custody last year, many from overdoses.

Prison systems have typically claimed they must move to digital mail in order to prevent contraband from entering facilities, but this is a red herring. While some guys I was incarcerated with did talk about receiving drugs in the mail, these small amounts paled in comparison to what was rumored to be trafficked by guards. After visits at Rikers were banned during the first wave of the pandemic, the amount of drugs found at the facility doubled. Since 2017, 25 city jail officers have been arrested in connection with smuggling contraband. DOC Commissioner Louis Molina has countered those statistics using the “few bad apples” argument—he reportedly stated last month that “twenty-five is not a majority of the people at the Department of Corrections.” To add insult to injury, Molina last year tried to rescind a rule banning jail officers from wearing cargo pants—a prohibition that had been put in place because guards had been using them to smuggle contraband.

The BOC has formed a commission to investigate the proposal before its next meeting on February 14—Valentine’s Day.

“There is a long history of DOC using variances to get around providing the bare minimum jail conditions guaranteed by the Constitution,” Jarrod Shanahan, author of *Captives: How Rikers Island Took New York City Hostage*, told *The Appeal*. One thing is certain: the BOC cannot grant this variance and continue to claim it is making NYC’s jail more humane. Paper mail is one of the few things that keeps prisoners feeling human.

**9 Feb - Link to Video of Frank Velgara Memorial Tribute. ¡Franky Vive!**

*We lost a great comrade in Frank Velgara, as evidenced in the video of the memorial tribute to him.*

**MORE:**

Since BombaYo, David Baida and Los Pleneros de la 21 used their own sound systems, the original livestream did not pick up their audio very well. We thank Joe Friendly for filming the Tribute and making this video available. ¡Franky Vive! [youtube.com/watch?v=FSrkiWKfyKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSrkiWKfyKE)

**13 Feb - Native advocates say they've been silenced by approved development**

*The Niskithe Prayer Camp is under attack in Nebraska for resisting the erasure of American Indians.*

**MORE:**

by Margaret Reist (*Lincoln Journal Star*)

Opponents of a development across the street from Wilderness Park and a Native sweat lodge in southwest Lincoln were back at the City Council Monday to illustrate how they say they've been treated.

Several people took their turn at the microphone during the public comment period, standing in silence for the five-minute window for each speaker. Others sat in the audience with duct tape over their mouths, and about 50 people gathered outside, holding signs, singing and playing Native drums.

“You effectively silenced the voices of your community with lawsuits and police and so I’m going to take that time to reflect that silence,” said Wyatt Nelson, one of 10 people who expressed their opposition by standing in silence at the podium.

Numerous others spoke, many of them talking about the history of colonization and Natives being stripped of their lands.

Fran Kaye said although the developer may hold title to the land, she asked the council to consider the history of taking land from Natives for profit.

“We ask that you consider what that means,” she said.

Rose Godinez, senior legal policy counsel for the ACLU of Nebraska, which represented opponents in a lawsuit involving the development, suggested the city could reverse its actions, though it’s unclear if that’s possible, since the ordinances have been signed by the mayor and are in effect.

She also suggested council members, the mayor and the city attorney meet with advocates, listen to their concerns and “humble themselves to the original landowners ... and confront and dismantle the legacies of colonization.”

“The ACLU supports and defends the rights of all Native American peoples to retain their culture and religious tradition and practices, and this religious freedom is tied to the protection of the land,” she said.

The land in question is about 75 acres south of Pioneers Boulevard between First Street and U.S. 77, where Wilderness Crossing LLC plans to build 162 single-family homes, 134 town homes and 205 apartments. Sam Manzitto Jr. bought the land from the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln.

The land is across the street from Wilderness Park and a Native sweat lodge on private land known as the Fish Farm. Opponents say a housing development will cause flooding issues, negatively impact wildlife and native habitat and threaten the sanctity of the sweat lodge.

Godinez said trees on Snell Hill – where the development is planned – play a part in Native ceremonies and trees bulldozed last week had Native prayer ties protesters saw in a pile on the ground after the trees came down.

The land has been designated in the City-County Comprehensive Plan for future urban residential development since 2002, and before the council approved the zoning and annexation changes, the developer made several modifications to plans in attempt to address concerns.

Among those: building a 6-foot fence along the east side of the development nearest Wilderness Park, creating a 10-foot outlot and including a stretch of First Street in the development to reduce traffic, promising to plant native vegetation in the outlot and housing covenant restrictions.

The council passed the zoning and annexation ordinances in April and the owner of the Fish Farm filed a lawsuit appealing the council's actions and opponents filed an appeal with the city Board of Zoning Appeals.

Judges dismissed both the landowner's appeal and a request by city officials to decide whether the zoning board had jurisdiction. The judge in the zoning appeals case said that was up to the zoning appeals board, and city officials told opponents the board didn't have jurisdiction.

That led to last week's protests at the development site, as bulldozers began tree removal.

The council took a break after people who'd been outside lined the back of the council chambers holding signs. Council Chairwoman Tammy Ward asked opponents to remove the signs because a city ordinance prohibits signs in the council chambers.

After the break, the signs were gone but many of the protesters remained, and several more spoke, appealing to the council to recognize Native concerns.

## **14 Feb - Marshall Eddie Conway Has Gone to the Ancestors**

*Remembering the life and struggle of a beloved comrade and former political prisoner.*

### **MORE:**

*"Do your little part. Do whatever you can to help change these conditions. Because we're moving into a critical period of history, not just for poor and oppressed people, Black people, but for humanity itself. So you need to engage. Do whatever little bit you can, but you need to do something."*

—Eddie Conway in 2019, celebrating five years of freedom

It is with the heaviest of hearts that we announce the death of our friend, co-worker, and comrade Marshall "Eddie" Conway.

Eddie joined the ancestors on February 13, 2023, surrounded by family and loved ones. After falling ill nearly a year ago, while still dealing with the immeasurable toll nearly 44 years of incarceration as a political prisoner took on his body, Eddie had been hospitalized and fighting valiantly to recover. That is who he is, who he was, and who he always will be: a fighter. After a lifetime of fighting, though, the time has come at last for our dear Eddie to rest—and for all of us to carry on his fight.

Eddie was born on April 23, 1946, in a deeply segregated Baltimore—a city shaped by blockbusting, white flight, and the organized disinvestment from Black communities. At 18, he enlisted in the US Army, an experience that would prove to be politically formative for Eddie, throwing into sharp relief the contradictions of a country founded on slavery, structural racism, and genocidal violence that nevertheless professed to defend "democracy" with bombs, guns, and endless war.

Returning home to Baltimore, Eddie confronted the pervasive evils of racism head-on. He was working in the medical sector and at Bethlehem Steel when, in 1968, the city erupted like so many others following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.—an explosion of rage and pain and need for action that brought Eddie

into the orbit of the nascent Black Panther Party, in which he became a core member of the newly-established Baltimore chapter.

The Baltimore BPP chapter, with Eddie's support and leadership, built strong community ties through efforts like a free breakfast program, a system of robust internal political education, and an increasingly widespread local distribution network for the national BPP newspaper—despite near constant police harassment, and even high-level infiltration of the branch. This was the era of COINTELPRO, in which local police forces were enlisted by the national security state to crush the successful systemic challenge the Panthers and other associated revolutionary groups were posing to America's racist, exploitative status quo. It was at the height of this era that Eddie was framed for the 1970 killing of a Baltimore police officer, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison in 1971, after a heavily politicized trial in which Eddie was denied proper legal representation.

Even in the darkest of times, in the most hopeless of places, Eddie's commitment to organizing for liberation was unwavering. Within his first weeks inside the Maryland penitentiary, he had already emerged as a leader of the incarcerated chapter of the BPP. Despite constant, dehumanizing, and often violent pushback from prison authorities, he would go on to play a lead role in creating organizations like the United Prisoners Labor Union and the Maryland Penitentiary Intercommunal Survival Collective, organizing with fellow incarcerated people to build collective power for self-determination and self-defense. While incarcerated, Eddie worked relentlessly to protect and expand prisoners' rights to communication and education; for instance, he helped organize the "To Say Their Own Word" seminar program, developed as a way to cross-pollinate radical thought inside and outside the prison. He was also instrumental in the founding of Friend of a Friend, a mentorship program designed to help young incarcerated men prepare for reintegration into their communities upon release.

Year after year, decade after decade, Eddie carried on not only with the tremendous bravery needed to contest America's brutal system of mass incarceration while he was himself confined within it, but also with an enduring and perhaps surprising commitment to modesty. As he wrote in his autobiography, published in 2011:

*Organizing is my life's work, and even though I initially balked at becoming a prison organizer, that is where most of my work has been done. Friends and family tell me that I have influenced hundreds of young people, but I don't know. I simply see the error of this society's ways up close and feel compelled to do something about it; I have tried my hardest to avoid getting caught up in the cult of the personality that often develops around political prisoners. I have walked the prison yard and seen admiration in the eyes of others, but had to remind myself, as I straightened my posture, that it is about something bigger than me. Prisons are the place where society dumps those who have become obsolete, and at present there are perhaps no other people who have become more dispensable in this country than African-descended people. The minute that we began to stand up and hold this country accountable for the many wrongs done to us, the prisons began to swell with black women and men. It is as if the entire justice system is a beast that consumes black bodies, and prisons are the belly.*

Eddie's loved ones and supporters never gave up on him, keeping a decades-long solidarity movement going and agitating persistently for his release, but it was only in 2014—after a 2012 decision by the Maryland Court of Appeals that invalidated many historical verdicts due to faulty jury instructions—that Eddie was finally able to secure his freedom.

Despite the unimaginable toll that 44 years of incarceration had taken on him, Eddie's organizing did not stop when he walked out of prison. He became our beloved colleague at The Real News Network, where he continued his passion for education and media-making in the service of the fight against mass incarceration as Executive Producer and the host of Rattling the Bars, his weekly video program. He also played a key role in the formation of Tubman House, which, in the wake of the Baltimore Uprising, seized vacant property and land for community needs in Sandtown-Winchester—the neighborhood where Baltimore police killed Freddie Gray.

Eddie never left the struggle he had been waging for so long, even as his health declined. We are endlessly grateful to him for that. And we are grateful that this incredible man, who endured so much, was also able to find years of joy, love, and solace in his marriage to Dominique Stevenson, a true comrade and freedom fighter who supported him inside and outside of the prison walls.

He will be missed—by everyone here at *The Real News*, by the city that loves him, and by all those around the world who were touched by his light. We will miss his voice, his revolutionary clarity, and his unbreakable commitment to fighting on the side of the oppressed. We will carry on that fight, because that's what Eddie would do. We are heartbroken that he is gone, but we are grateful that we were lucky enough to know him, and we are sending all our love and solidarity to his family.

## **15 Feb - Missouri Republicans Weaponize 'Whistleblowing' To Shut Down Pediatric Care For Transgender Youth**

*To further their nationwide efforts to restrict access to transgender health care, Republicans in the state of Missouri have deployed a former case worker at Washington University's Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital, who they claim is a whistleblower.*

### **MORE:**

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

On February 9, Jamie Reed went public with allegations against the pediatric center in a post that appeared on "The Free Press," a website founded by commentator Bari Weiss. That same day Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey announced that Reed had submitted a "sworn affidavit" and his office, along with the Missouri Department of Social Services, had opened an investigation into the pediatric center.

"We have received disturbing allegations that individuals at the Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital have been harming hundreds of children each year, including by using experimental drugs on them," Bailey asserted. "We take this evidence seriously and are thoroughly investigating to make sure children are not harmed by individuals who may be more concerned with a radical social agenda than the health of children."

Missouri Republican Senator Josh Hawley was ready with a letter that he sent to Washington University and the St. Louis Children's Hospital, where he announced that his office would investigate the pediatric center's "treatment practices in order to present American taxpayers and parents with all the facts relevant to policymaking and medical treatment decisions."

"If even a fraction of the whistleblower's new allegations is corroborated, the Center should be immediately shut down," Hawley declared.

Bailey followed his announcement with a letter to the president of St. Louis Children's Hospital on February 10 that urged the institution to ban the prescription of "puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones to any new patients." (The hospital also launched their own inquiry.)

Yet as Bailey acknowledged, Reed's affidavit was submitted two weeks before Reed went public with her allegations at "The Free Press." That gave Reed and Republicans time to figure out how best to weaponize the allegations against transgender care in general.

Reed is represented by Vernadette Broyles, a notorious anti-trans attorney with the Child and Parental Rights Campaign, and Ernie Trakas, a Republican St. Louis County council member who also serves as a senior litigation counsel for CPRC.

### **Going After Medicaid Coverage For Transgender Care**

Bailey, Broyles, Hawley, Trakas, and Weiss are involved in a calculated effort to exploit the goodwill that is typically generated from whistleblowing in order to help conservative religious extremists notch another victory in their culture war against transgender people.

Most significantly, the whistleblower complaint incorporates some of the language found in successful lawsuits under the False Claims Act that are aimed at holding health care companies for Medicaid fraud.

Reed asserted that from 2020 to 2022 “medical transition” procedures were “paid for mostly by private insurance,” but it was also her understanding the pediatric center had “billed the cost for these procedures to state and federal publicly funded insurance programs.”

“I have personally witnessed staff say they were uncomfortable with how the Center has told them they have to code bills sent to publicly funded insurance programs,” Reed added. “I have witnessed staff directly ask the providers for clarification on billing questions and have providers dismiss the concerns and work to have the patients have this care covered as the priority.”

An ultimate goal may be to ensure that the state’s Medicaid program, which voters expanded through a vote in 2020, no longer covers gender-affirming care for transgender youth by manufacturing this scandal.

### **Fighting The ‘Tools Of Indoctrination’**

Erin Reed, a trans queer journalist (no relation to the whistleblower), went point by point in their newsletter *Erin In the Morning* to debunk the claims made by Jamie Reed. I recommend that you read that to understand the disinformation and pseudo-science that underpins the worst allegations. Instead of dealing with the specific allegations, I’ll focus on the political players involved.

The Child and Parental Rights Campaign was founded in 2019. Over the past two years, it has received over \$370,000 in grants, contributions, and other payments, but CPRC does not disclose the sources of these funds. Only \$2,500 from the Matthew 2540 Foundation, which is an organization that says they are committed to Christian values to create “strong families,” has been made public.

Broyles contends that she is fighting a “transgender threat” to kids and American culture that is “sow[ing] the conditions for totalitarianism.” This supposedly involves “tools of indoctrination” intended to “compel kids to normalize a radical new belief system by their actions.” That radical belief system, to Broyles, is made up of medically-backed treatments like puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, which Bailey and other Missouri officials may try to permanently ban.

Puberty blockers, as described by the St. Louis Children’s Hospital, help transgender teens block hormones and “delay changes that can affect gender expression.” They are temporary and can give transgender teens time to consider whether they would like hormone therapy.

For transgender older teenagers and young adults, the St. Louis Children’s Hospital says hormone therapy can be important for “mental health, confidence, body image, and overall quality of life.”

Both treatments are supported by the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Endocrine Society.

According to the American Medical Association, one study conducted in 2022 followed “more than 100 transgender and nonbinary youth 13–20 years old.” Results indicated that “youth who received gender-affirming medications—including puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones—had a 60% lower odds of moderate or severe depression and 73% lower odds of suicidality over those first 12 months, compared with youth who did not get such medications.”

In a case in Arizona, the Child and Parental Rights Campaign supported a lawsuit to ensure Arizona's Medicaid program did not pay for a transgender teen's transition surgery. Broyles erroneously claimed that rigorous clinical studies have not been performed to know whether the procedure is "safe and effective."

CPRC was behind a lawsuit in Florida that alleged that a school district had "illegally counseled their daughter about her gender confusion issues without their consent." A federal judge declined to rule on the case in January, and CPRC appealed the decision.

### **'Forbid Your Child To Go To The Public School Counselor'**

Broyles is an open supporter of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' "Don't Say Gay" law. She cheers the law for its ability to prohibit school counselors from having conversations with students about their gender without informing parents. She is against public school counselors helping teenagers with gender identity issues that may affect their mental health, even if parents know about the discussions.

"If you have a child in school, monitor closely or frankly forbid your child to go to the public-school counselor," Broyles said at the Eagle Forum in 2020. (The Eagle Forum was founded by Phyllis Schlafly, who was a conservative activist known for her campaigns against reproductive healthcare and equal rights for women.)

Ernie Trakas of CPRC opposed President Joe Biden's executive order intended to promote rights for transgender children. He also objected to making certain governmental bathrooms gender-neutral, contending this was "all part of a conspiracy against religious freedom in America."

During a Senate hearing on rights to reproductive health care, Senator Josh Hawley tried to police how UC Berkeley School of Law professor Khiara Bridges discussed the issue. "You've referred to 'people with a capacity for pregnancy,'" Hawley mentioned. "Would that be women?"

Bridges explained to Hawley how trans men could become pregnant and that was why she was not simply saying women, but Hawley refused to take what she said seriously. Hawley also has co-sponsored national legislation to prevent transgender women from competing in women's sports.

### **Journalism That Fiercely Depends On The Right-Wing Political Machine**

Bari Weiss may contend that the "Free Press" is built around "honesty, doggedness, and fierce independence," but the fact is Reed's self-proclaimed whistleblowing did not spread independently from a right-wing political machine that has committed itself to making it harder for transgender youth to exist.

The Concerned Women of America Legislative Committee put out a press release the day that the Free Press published Reed's op-ed. A part of the New Christian Right, the organization was founded by Beverly LaHaye, whose husband Timothy LaHaye authored the rapture fiction series *Left Behind*. It previously received millions of dollars from the Koch network, known for advancing the conservative agenda in legislatures throughout the United States.

These same health-destroying practices are happening in children's hospitals across the country and are the reason so many state legislatures are working to block the use of mutilating drugs and surgeries 'permanently harming' vulnerable youth," proclaimed Penny Nance, the CEO of CWA. "Reed's first-hand account is every reason to shut down the transactivism infecting our country peddled by the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Big Pharma, corporate America, and the Biden Administration."

Breakpoint, a publication of the Colson Center, which was founded by President Richard Nixon's hatchet man, Chuck Colson, shared the allegations with their followers. Colson was an evangelical Christian

involved in the Watergate scandal. He also pled guilty to obstruction of justice after he attempted to defame Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg.

Weiss herself is well-known for her anti-trans views and previously peddled disinformation about transgender medical treatments. For example, Weiss published a similar post from Abigail Shrier in 2021 that purportedly featured two trans doctors who “blew the whistle” on “sloppy” transgender medical care, including the use of puberty blockers.

For those who do not know, Shrier authored a book about the “transgender craze.” Medical researcher Dr. Jack Turban concluded, “The book’s central (and false) premise is that there are massive numbers of transgender youth who are not truly transgender, but rather just confused, and that they are all being rushed into gender-affirming medical interventions and surgeries that they will later regret.”

“As a physician and a researcher who has dedicated my career to taking care of and understanding transgender youth, I recognized the book as bizarre and full of misinformation. I assumed it wouldn’t gain much traction. I was wrong,” Turban added.

### **More Than Two Dozen States Move To Ban Transgender Medical Care**

The Associated Press reported in January that more than two dozen states have considered bans against gender-affirming care. The Republican governor in Utah signed a ban into law. Similar laws were passed in Alabama and Arkansas but have been put on hold by the courts.

In 2021, the NPR documented a “historic wave of anti-trans bills” aimed at transgender youth. “Texas Governor Greg Abbott directed the state’s child welfare agency to investigate parents and health care providers who give gender-affirming care to trans youth, characterizing those actions as child abuse,” NPR recalled.

Nebraska, South Dakota, and Oklahoma Republicans have advanced bans against puberty blockers and hormone therapy, despite the fact that such treatments are supported by major medical associations.

The Oklahoma Senate Committee passed a bill on February 8 that would ban transgender medical care for anyone under the age of 18. The bill would make it a felony for a doctor to provide medical care. A doctor would face up to 10 years in prison and a potential \$100,000 fine if charged under the law.

“I think Oklahoma is currently positioning itself to be the most dangerous state for trans people in the country,” declared Nicole McAfee, who is the director of the LGBTQ rights organization Freedom Oklahoma.

Missouri Governor Michael Parson, who appointed Bailey to serve as the state’s attorney general, was sorely disappointed last year when the state legislature failed to pass a ban on transgender students participating in sports teams that match their gender identity.

Republicans in the state’s legislature proposed “more than a dozen separate pieces of legislation specifically addressing transgender youth in Missouri ahead of the 2023 session.” The so-called whistleblower allegations from Reed put pressure on opponents of these proposals and may create the political climate needed to pass numerous anti-trans measures.

### **24 Feb - Stop Cop City NYC**

**WHAT:** Speakout + Noise Demo

**WHEN:** 7:00pm, Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) - 80 29<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

Join the family of Jamel Floyd, murdered in MDC in 2020, in memory of Jamel, Tortuguita, and everyone killed by cops and prison guards. Let those inside know we fight with them!

**25 Feb - Queer Craft Club**

**WHAT:** Meetup

**WHEN:** 2:00pm, Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Woodbine - 585 Woodward Avenue, Queens

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

Masks required. Bring a craft to work on or message @queercraftclub on instagram if you need a project!

**26 Feb - Letter-writing To Forest Defenders**

**WHAT:** Letter-writing Afternoon for Kids & Adults

**WHEN:** 2:00pm, Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Woodbine, 585 Woodward Avenue, Ridgewood

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

Stop Cop City! Drop the charges! Let's show them our love and support. We will provide the postcards, you bring ideas for inspiring and uplifting messages and drawings.

**3 Mar - Ben Morea: Unified Field**

**WHAT:** Opening Reception

**WHEN:** 7:00pm, Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

**WHERE:** P.I.T. - 411 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

small format visual works and discussion with the artist, activist and founder of legendary anarchist affinity group Up Against The Wall Motherfucker, presented in collaboration with NYC Anarchist Book Fair Collective.

**4 Mar - Ridgewood Farmshare Bake Sale**

**WHAT:** Bake sale

**WHEN:** 10:00am, Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Woodbine, 585 Woodward Avenue, Ridgewood

**COST:** Baked goods at all prices; donations also accepted

**MORE:**

We're having a bake sale to raise funds for subsidizing the summer CSA with Norwich Meadows Farm. Our goal is to provide more partially and fully funded CSAs as well as future sliding scale pricing for more accessibility to organic locally grown food to all income levels in our community.