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Updates for March 7th

17 Feb - Report urges capping prison sentences at 20 years to end mass incarceration

Shortening sentences "is integral to a wholesale reimagining of public safety," says the Sentencing Project

MORE:

by Brett Wilkins (*Salon*)

Policymakers should take steps to limit prison sentences in the United States—which incarcerates far more people than any other country and where the imprisoned population has soared 500% in recent decades—to 20 years for all crimes, a report published Wednesday by a leading criminal justice reform group argues.

"As the United States marks 50 years of mass incarceration, dramatic change is necessary to ensure another 50 do not follow," asserts the Sentencing Project report, entitled *Counting Down: Paths to a 20-Year Maximum Prison Sentence*. "In no small part due to long sentences, the United States has one of the world's highest incarceration rates, with nearly two million people in prisons and jails."

The report continues:

The destabilizing force of mass incarceration deepens social and economic inequity—families lose not only a loved one, but income and childcare. By age 14, 1 in 14 children in the United States experiences a parent leaving for jail or prison. Individuals returning to the community face profound barriers to employment and housing. Meantime the communities most impacted by crime—poor communities and communities of color—disproportionately bear the burden of incarceration's impacts. Long sentences affect young Black men disproportionately compared to every other race and age group. Twice as many Black children as white children have experienced parental incarceration. Mass incarceration entrenches cycles of harm, trauma, and disinvestment and consumes funds that might support investment in interventions that empower communities and create lasting safety.

"In the United States, over half of people in prison are serving a decade or longer and 1 in 7 incarcerated people are serving a life sentence," the publication states. "To end mass incarceration, the United States must dramatically shorten sentences. Capping sentences for the most serious offenses at 20 years and shifting sentences for all other offenses downward, including by decriminalizing some acts, is a vital decarceration strategy to arrive at a system that values human dignity and prioritizes racial equity."

The report notes that "in countries such as Germany and Norway, periods of incarceration rarely exceed 20 years, including for homicide offenses."

While no country has yet implemented a 20-year incarceration limit, Russia caps women's imprisonment at 20 years. In Norway, prison terms are limited to 21 years, with the possibility of extensions if the inmate is deemed to pose a continued danger to society. Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian white supremacist who massacred 77 people and injured hundreds more in a pair of 2011 attacks, was sentenced to 21 years behind bars. His first parole bid was denied last year.

"In countries such as Germany and Norway, periods of incarceration rarely exceed 20 years, including for homicide offenses."

Cape Verde, Paraguay, and Portugal limit imprisonment to 25 years. Countries including Brazil, Nicaragua, Congo, Uruguay, and Venezuela have 30-year maximum sentences.

The report also aims to dispel fears that releasing violent offenders would lead to a surge in recidivism.

"Research shows that, while very serious, committing homicide is typically an isolated offense," the report states. "When individuals who commit homicides return to the community, their likelihood of committing another homicide is extremely low, typically 1-3%."

Liz Komar, sentencing reform counsel at the Sentencing Project and co-author of the report, said in a statement that "to end mass incarceration, the U.S. must dramatically shorten sentences. Lawmakers can do this by capping sentences for the most serious offenses at 20 years and shifting sentences for all other offenses proportionately downward, including by decriminalizing some acts."

Sentencing Project co-director of research Ashley Nellis, who also authored the new report, said that "in large part due to long prison sentences, we have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world."

"The destabilizing force of mass incarceration deepens social and economic inequity, while entrenching cycles of harm, trauma, and disinvestment," Nellis added. "Mass incarceration also consumes funds that could instead support investments in the types of interventions that empower communities and create lasting safety."

The report recommends seven legislative reforms "to cap sentences at 20 years and right-size the sentencing structure":

- Abolish death and life without parole sentences, limiting maximum sentences to 20 years;
- Limit murder statutes to intentional killing, excluding sentences such as felony murder, and reduce homicide penalties;
- Eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing and reform sentencing guidelines to ensure that judges can use their discretion to consider mitigating circumstances;
- Provide universal access to parole and ensure timely review;
- Eliminate consecutive sentences and limit sentence enhancements, including repealing "truth-in-sentencing" and "habitual offender" laws;
- Create an opportunity for judicial "second look" re-sentencing within a maximum of 10 years of imprisonment, regardless of an individual's offense; and
- Shift all sentences downward, including by de-felonizing many offenses and decriminalizing many misdemeanors.

"Capping all sentences at 20 years is a challenging but feasible policy goal, as demonstrated by its success in other countries and a project worthy of advocates' and policymakers' attention," the report concludes. "The path to a 20-year cap will be different in every jurisdiction, but all steps offer vital hope to people serving lengthy sentences and their loved ones."

"Of course," the authors added, "obtaining a proportional, fair system of justice will take more than just shortening sentences, but it is integral to a wholesale reimagining of public safety that focuses on healthy and empowered communities, transforming prisons, investing in evidence-based prevention, and pursuing restorative alternatives to the carceral system."

A separate report published this month by the reform group Vera Institute of Justice also recommends capping U.S. prison sentences at 20 years.

"Severe sentences do not deter crime, retribution often does not help survivors of crime heal, and the U.S. sentencing system overestimates who is a current danger to the community and when incarceration is needed for public safety," the authors argued. "Instead, we need a system that privileges liberty while creating real safety and repairing harm."

"The United States must move away from sentencing policy rooted in retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation, which the evidence shows do not deliver safety and satisfaction," the report asserts. "To reduce mass incarceration, prison sentences should be capped at 20 years for adults convicted of the most serious crimes and 15 years for young people up to age 25."

"Other sentencing reforms should include removing prior conviction sentencing enhancements, abolishing mandatory minimums, and creating second-look resentencing options for those currently behind bars," the paper adds.

18 Feb - 'Unsung hero': the baker and activist whose death inspired calls for restorative justice

We don't include a lot outside the realm of political prisoner, or at least PP adjacent, content. But folks in our collective knew Jen Angel and her importance to anarchy/anarchism can't be overstated. RIP, Jen.

MORE:

by Sam Levin (*The Guardian*)

Jen Angel, a beloved Oakland baker and longtime activist, was in the parking lot of a bank on 6 February when she was robbed and then injured by the fleeing vehicle. The 48-year-old died three days later.

As word spread, Angel's friends and loved ones did exactly what she would've done for them – they started organizing. They fundraised first for medical costs and then expenses related to her death, created spreadsheets to coordinate tasks, and formed a plan to ensure her bakery, Angel Cakes, would stay open and employees would be cared for. It was the kind of mutual aid and collective action she'd championed as a social justice advocate and anarchist. And as reporters began reaching out, her friends wrote a statement imploring them not to exploit her story:

"Jen's values call for pursuing all available alternatives to traditional prosecution, such as restorative justice ... Please do not use Jen's life legacy of care and community to further inflame narratives of fear, hatred and vengeance. Jen would not want to advance putting public resources into policing, incarceration, or other state violence that perpetuates the cycles of violence that resulted in this tragedy."

Pete Woiwode, a longtime friend, said Angel was steadfast in her opposition to prisons and support of community-based accountability: "I have an enormous amount of gratitude for Jen's clarity and her mandate to us in our grief ... And as Jen often says: 'We don't ask anybody to organize for us, we organize for ourselves.' So we're organizing."

As the call for restorative justice has gone viral, Angel's friends said her rejection of policing just scratches the surface of her politics and impact; interviews with a dozen loved ones and collaborators paint a picture of a fiercely-driven activist who had a huge reach across social movements, but never sought the kind of fame she's now receiving.

Teen zines to major media institutions

Angel grew up in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, and at age 16 in 1991, launched her first zine, called *Fucktooth*. She wrote about her life and interviewed punk inspirations and it quickly became popular in the underground DIY scene and punk subculture.

Matt Leonard, also a teen at the time, found the zine at a concert and became Angel's pen pal, sending \$1 to \$2 in the mail in exchange for *Fucktooth* issues: "If you're a young person feeling that the dominant culture doesn't reflect your values, whether due to racism, sexism, homophobia, the aesthetics of pop culture or musical interests, some people just complain about it, but Jen was always someone who said: 'No, I'm going to build the things I want and create what I want to see.'" The two later became friends.

Angel went on to found *Clamor* magazine, billed as a "DIY guide to everyday revolution". The journalist Victoria Law said Angel was the first person to pay her to write about resistance in women's prisons in the early 2000s: "Not a lot of organizers and activists were even thinking about that at the time." When one prison later demanded *Clamor* reveal Law's whistleblower source, Angel refused and assured Law she'd have her back. Law later published multiple books on the subject.

Over the years, Angel was dedicated to anti-war activism, Occupy Oakland, workers' rights, fighting fossil fuel companies, and police and prison abolition. She developed lasting projects that brought those movements to a wider audience, including Agency, an anarchist PR project; Aid & Abet, an event management group; and the Allied Media Conference, a network for organizing that has continued for more than 20 years.

She understood that “the story is power and has to be at the center of your work”, said Woiwode. Ramsey Kanaan, a publisher who worked on the Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair with Angel, described Angel as the “typical unsung hero – the person that actually got shit done”.

Angel was particularly skilled at welcoming new people into organizing and executing ambitious projects that helped shift culture, said activist Chris Crass: “She was concerned with creating massive opportunities for people to be on the right side of history – the side of anti-racism, feminism, queer and trans liberation and economic justice ... And she was so fucking nonchalant about it. She didn't have to tell you she was a badass, she just was.”

Her partner, Ocean Mottley, recalled her “lust for living” and said that on their first date at Oakland's Lake Merritt, they hugged upon meeting, and that after a few steps, she asked for a second hug – a good sign for their future together. “She always had questions for people because she was so curious and wanted to know all about you,” he said in an email. “I got a sense very early from being with Jen that it meant being part of something much bigger.”

Angel, her loved ones said, also cultivated diverse polyamorous and sex-positive communities; loved clothing swaps; was fond of nature and rose gardens; and had a keen ability to bring people together through food.

The community bakery

Angel regularly hosted “gourmet dinner nights” in Oakland, recalled Nupur Modi-Parekh, a close friend: “The idea was we're gonna put love, energy and time into making good food, and we want you to come enjoy it, with no obligation to contribute. That was her [philosophy] – we take care of each other and you don't need to bring something to the table every time.”

At one gathering in 2008, she made cupcakes decorated like sunflowers that were “as delicious as they were beautiful”, recalled Woiwode, who said the group encouraged her to go professional, and that the next day, she emailed them a potential business plan.

Angel Cakes launched that year and then in 2016 opened its first storefront, in a historic Oakland building designed to look like a gingerbread house. She had high standards for her products, recalled her mother, Pat Engel, who said in an email that she would spend hours at the shop with her daughter: “I would garden in the front, whatever I could do. Not decorate cupcakes, though. I had to train to do that! I had to practice a lot and show her sample versions before I could get anywhere near the cupcakes.” When Angel and her twin sister were children, her mom took a class so that she could bake them cakes of their choosing. Angel's bakery celebrated mom's lessons: “Jen learned practically everything she knows from her mom.”

Engel added she wanted her daughter remembered for her kindness, recounting their annual vacations together, most recently in Jamaica, where they hand-fed water to hummingbirds – “one of our last significant events we shared together”.

At the bakery, Angel put her politics into practice – paying employees fair wages; donating to social justice causes; welcoming people home from prison with free cupcakes; and establishing policies against working with police to resolve issues.

When a car crashed into her business and when someone threw rocks through her window, she didn't want the people responsible to be criminalized, her friends recalled.

'She wouldn't want more injustice'

Angel was consistent in her principles and her loved ones said they felt a duty to honor those beliefs after her death.

"Jen understood the role of the police in maintaining a system that is racist and not equitable for all. She was adamantly against using the state or police force to solve problems," Mottley said. "I know she would have wanted to find a way to heal our communities from this tragedy that didn't perpetuate more injustice. She believed that incarcerating the people who harmed her would only continue suffering. She believed injustice can only be healed through love and community."

Emily Harris, a longtime friend and policy director at the Ella Baker Center, which advocates against incarceration, noted Angel's own writing on the subject in 2013: "Accountability processes attempt to put many of my values into practice – mutual aid, respect, direct action, a DIY ethic, an acknowledgement that 'crime,' safety, harm and support are complex."

Some have misunderstood "restorative justice" or non-cooperation with police to mean "doing nothing", but Angel's friends say it's the opposite: it's about prioritizing survivors' needs and healing (which isn't a focus of the criminal process) and having them dictate how people who caused harm can be accountable for their actions.

"What is beautiful about this moment and Jen's legacy is that we get to lift up the fact that the current system's ability to respond to violence is inadequate for what most victims and their families want," Harris said. "How do we change the conditions of Oakland to prevent this harm in the future? That might be about supporting these individuals [who robbed her] so they never do harm like this again – and not by putting them in prison."

Police have made no arrests in her death.

Kanaan said he was reminded of Voltairine de Cleyre, a US anarchist who was shot in 1902 by her former student but survived – and then advocated he not be imprisoned "for an act which was the product of a diseased brain."

"Not a lot of people knew her at the time, but she became famous after the fact, and I suspect we're going to see that with Jen."

Earlier this week, her family held an "honor walk" in the hospital to commemorate Angel's wish that her organs be donated; her mother noted that this "final act" would benefit the lives of up to 70 people and encouraged others to become donors in her honor: "Even if you're young now, you never know what will happen tomorrow."

On her 48th birthday, days before her death, Angel was reflecting on life and death, posting an excerpt from a Mary Oliver poem:

"Tell me, what else should I have done? Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

20 Feb - Statement by Emily Murphy

Emily Murphy has been imprisoned and denied bail since the Jan 21 protest in downtown ATL following the police murder of Tortuguita. They were charged with "domestic terrorism" despite there being no evidence of them doing anything besides attending a protest.

MORE:

I am writing this statement to describe the horrific conditions at the Fulton County Jail Section of the ACDC. I was arrested on Sat, Jan 21 and taken to Fulton County Rice Street where I immediately informed intake the nurse of my vegan dietary needs. It has been now 29 days since my arrest and I still have not had consistent access to vegan food. The injustices around food and food systems for incarcerated folks go far beyond my personal needs. Many others have been denied timely access to food required to meet their dietary and health needs, such as folks who are diabetic being forced to wait many days or weeks for adequate meals that are necessary to regulate blood sugar. A friend that needs access to gluten free food submitted a medical form over 3 and a half weeks ago and is still waiting. Per the jail policy, it is our right to have meals that are nutritionally balanced. However, we do not have access to fruits and vegetables, not even through purchases at the commissary. Also, per jail policy, two of our meals are supposed to be served hot. Our food is prepared at Fulton County Rice Street even though there is a working kitchen that services ACDC. The food arrives here ice cold and the oatmeal and grits have to be cut into chunks to be eaten because they are so coagulated. Our trays often come crushed, broken apart, and stepped on with the food all mixed together. None of the food has even an ounce of seasoning, with salt and pepper only available for purchase through commissary, causing accessibility to be an issue. Breakfast and lunch are served together anywhere from 1:45 to 5:30AM every morning with dinner not until around 6. The majority of folks here have only been charged, not convicted, of any alleged, so-called crime. Some have been here for 9+ months without a single phone call from their public defender. Most public defenders never answer the phone or communicate with their clients at all. Per jail policy, we are supposed to receive one visitor per week, however visitation access has been completely denied. We are only outside of our cells for no more than 3 hours each day and are forced to eat dinner inside the cell at times. Free time is often reduced or eliminated as a punitive measure for talking during head count or anything else the guards feel they want to take it away for. On two separate occasions I witnessed guards pull out and hold tasers to people's backs for things such as passing a friend a bible verse under their door and a verbal disagreement over the tv channel. Medical requests are often ignored, and medical information that is supposed to be private is not kept that way. Guards have also made derogatory comments regards folk's mental health and medication usage, which is completely disgusting. Fulton County Jail policy states that all inmates are guaranteed respect and dignity. Locking people in cages, taking away "free time" and threatening with tasers is not a relationship of respect and dignity, but abuse of power and oppression. Solidarity with incarcerated folks everywhere. All people should be free.

22 Feb - Community Notice Regarding FBI Harassment and Indictment

Report from Puget Sound Prisoner Support on recent FBI harassment and indictment against a Washington state activist.

MORE:

Puget Sound Prisoner Support issues this notice regarding a Washington state-based activist who was recently indicted for Interstate Riot at the federal level from a Portland April 2021 arrest. This case is important for the broader Pacific Northwest abolitionist community because it highlights several issues of state repression and security culture that remain timelessly pertinent.

K was first alerted to the FBI's intention to contact them when an ex-partner told them that an FBI agent had called and asked for K's current contact information and address in early February 2023. Days later, K received a voicemail from someone claiming to be a Seattle FBI agent and wishing to return K's cellphone that had been seized by authorities during an arrest at a Portland protest in April 2021. K then made the correct decision to reach out to local anti-repression collective Puget Sound Prisoner Support, and we advised them to immediately call the National Lawyer's Guild federal defense hotline. Through a lawyer with the NLG contacting the FBI, K learned that it was actually a Portland FBI agent, and that K's state level charge from their Portland arrest had been upgraded to a federal level charge and there was a warrant out for their arrest.

After K's initial arrest in Portland, charges were not filed and they were told that the state of Oregon would not be pressing charges at that time. Hearing that there are no charges filed can often lead to a sense of security that you have avoided state repression. Unfortunately, the state has many methods and tactics it can use to repress your activities and stop political movements. This is why we stress the importance of Security Culture before, during and after your arrest. Charges can be re-filed, other charges can be brought, and state level charges can be handed to the feds for prosecution. The metric for meeting the requirements for a charge to be handled at the federal level has proven to be shockingly low. As many of the cases from the 2020 Uprising have shown, this can be as trivial as simply involving interstate commerce, but this case specifically regards allegedly crossing state lines to participate in a riot.

The important takeaway is that after an arrest, it is not useful to assume that a possible charge isn't coming until you have been given an indication that those specific charges are no longer being investigated. Sometimes this means dismissal of a charge (and here, there are more than one kind) or the statute of limitations for the alleged crime has passed (and even here there are ways in which the state can move around those limitations), although the statute of limitations is difficult to pin down for any alleged crime due to jurisdictional overlap. With this in mind, it is important that strong Security Culture remains a thing we participate in for life, not just the protest/demonstration. Every interaction with law enforcement is the opening of the possibility of future repression, and for this reason a part of security culture practice is taking that reality seriously. Additionally, you can make Signal encrypted messaging a habit for all your text communication because we never know what texts may be of interest to the authorities. While Signal is by no means foolproof, in many cases using Signal with disappearing messages can decrease what texts the police have access to if they do get access to your phone.

When K was arrested in Portland, they were in possession of their cell phone, which was seized by the Portland police, and has been in police custody ever since. Despite having a lockscreen, either state or federal police were able to gain access to the text messages on K's phone, and several of those text messages are being used to incriminate K. This is worth highlighting as it serves as a reminder that bringing your cell phone to a protest creates the risk of losing it to police custody, endangering yourself and others. It's important to never discuss movement activity that could be criminalized on electronic devices, as in circumstances above, as it can be used against you/your community in the case of your arrest or detention.

A strong security culture doesn't mean just one person knows the right things to say and the right things to *not* say, but that everyone in our organizing circles feels comfortable to remind each other when security culture practices aren't being followed. It can be as easy as practicing interrupting your friend to say, "Hey, I don't think it's a good idea to talk about that right now, that's not very good security culture." A strong security culture not only keeps yourself safe(r), but your friends safe(r) as well.

Most importantly, none of us are free until all are free. We will continue to provide support in our capacity to K as they traverse this legal process. We will only escape the threat of state repression against our movements when the state and its prison society is no more.

23 Feb - Update on Anarchist Political Prisoner Jorge "Yorch" Esquivel

An update and call for solidarity with anarchist political prisoner Jorge "Yorch" Esquivel, detained since December on trumped-up charges.

MORE:

Jorge "Yorch" Esquivel is a beloved compañero of the punk and anarchist community, and a long-time participant of the Okupa Che Guevara. He was arrested on December 8, 2022, by plainclothes police as he was leaving the campus of the Ciudad Universitaria (of the UNAM university) in Mexico City as part of a campaign of criminalization against the Okupa.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2016, an operation was carried out in which plainclothes policemen arbitrarily detained him, “planting” drugs on him in order to fabricate crimes against him. The whole case was plagued with irregularities. He was transferred to Oaxaca and then to a maximum-security prison in Hermosillo. The authorities used this strategy under the supposition that the distance would hinder his legal defense, but even so, thanks to the solidarity and legal work, he was reclassified from the crime of drug dealing to simple possession of narcotics, so he was released on bail in March 2016.

Jorge decided not to continue with the farce case against him and thus did not continue the process. In the meantime, the frame-up continued to be put together. Constant threats and journalistic reports did not cease; the press even took him for dead and accused him of participating in organized crime.

On December 9, 2022 he was arrested in exactly the same place – a few steps outside Ciudad Universitaria, where the Okupa is located and again by plainclothes police – with the grounds for this illegal detention being that the Attorney General’s Office appealed the decision to reclassify the crime.

The compañero’s health is fragile due to an extended hospitalization a couple years back and more recent bouts with different illnesses.

CURRENT SITUATION

Jorge is currently incarcerated in the Reclusorio Oriente prison in Mexico City, in the observation and classification area. In this area he has been unable to receive visits other than from his lawyers.

The legal process is in the evidence stage. The Attorney General’s evidence includes the testimony of the police officers who detained Jorge; one of them is deceased and the other has not been located. Due to this, the hearing scheduled for February 17, 2023, did not take place and a date was set for April 14.

On behalf of the legal team that has been working in solidarity to defend Jorge, two expert reports will be presented by an external expert (called a perito in Mexico), one in dactyloscopy to prove that the packages of narcotics were never touched by Jorge, and another one in criminalistics. These expert reports will be presented once the hearing is held on April 14.

This expert’s fees amount to 70,000 Mexican pesos (approximately 3804 USD/3567 euros/3164 pounds), which must be paid in two installments. In order for this person to start her work, she needs to receive the first half, and the second half should be paid at the time of the next court date.

Thanks to the solidarity of individuals, collectives and networks, it has been possible to cover Jorge’s expenses inside the prison, which have been very high due to the blatant corruption that reigns in Mexican prisons run by mafia groups that charge prisoners for everything from use of the bathroom to water, electricity, even the cell they are held in. The legal expenses up until now have been mostly covered as well, however, we call upon the solidarity of our friends and compañeros around the world to help us to raise the amount of the expert’s fees as soon as possible.

If you are interested in supporting us, please contact us at cna.mex@gmail.com for more information.

23 Feb - At Sing Sing, Prisoners' Charges of Brutal Beatings Prompt U.S. Inquiry

Dozens of inmates sued after the November incident, which sent seven to the hospital. They described systematic abuse by special teams of correctional officers.

MORE:

by Benjamin Weiser (*New York Times*)

Federal prosecutors are investigating allegations that corrections officers at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, N.Y., orchestrated beatings during a prisonwide search in November, sending at least seven prisoners to the hospital and more than 20 others to a medical unit.

A flood of officers, including special teams from other prisons, converged on cells over at least two days, ordering prisoners to strip to their boxer shorts and then punching and kicking them and slamming their heads against walls or floors, according to affidavits by 26 inmates who are part of a lawsuit filed Jan. 31 against New York State.

The allegations are buttressed by hospital records and a separate interview with Shamel Capers, a former Sing Sing inmate who is not part of the lawsuit and gave a firsthand account of violence that occurred just days before he was released.

The prisoners in their sworn statements describe one officer holding a man's arm against a radiator, burning him, and another officer twisting a prisoner's wrist and thumb and threatening to break his hand. Another prisoner describes how he was blinded for days after being pepper-sprayed while he was handcuffed.

"Every part of my body was burning, like nothing I ever experienced," the prisoner, Vincent Poliandro, says in his account.

Bruce A. Barket, a lawyer whose firm filed the lawsuit in the State Court of Claims, said it reported the allegations to the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York, which he said was investigating along with the F.B.I.

Mr. Barket said federal investigators have interviewed at least seven prisoners represented by the firm.

"This was nothing short of a planned attack on incarcerated men by correction officers," said Mr. Barket. "Worse, it was approved of and overseen by high-ranking officials in the prison."

He added, "In our view, staff and supervisors engaged in criminal conduct, and should be held accountable. The suit seeks \$1 million in damages for each prisoner.

The U.S. attorney's office and the F.B.I. declined to comment on the investigation.

Thomas Mailey, a spokesman for the State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, which runs the prisons, said in a statement that the agency cooperates with all investigations, but does not comment "to ensure the integrity of those investigations."

The department said it has 21 of the special Corrections Emergency Response Teams, known as CERT, based in correctional facilities around the state that conduct facility searches, among other tasks. Many of those officers who participated in the incident at Sing Sing wore black tactical gear with visors, according to the affidavits and Mr. Capers.

A spokesman for the union for state corrections officers said the organization had no comment.

Sing Sing, a maximum-security prison opened in 1825 on the Hudson River, is about 30 miles north of New York City and holds about 1,400 inmates, the corrections department said. The facility is perhaps best known as the former home of the state's execution chamber, where more than 600 people went to their deaths in the electric chair.

According to the affidavits, the beatings occurred largely on Nov. 9 in a housing area known as A block, and the next day in B block, when the prison was on lockdown.

Most accounts begin the same way: A prisoner is ordered to strip and carry his mattress out to be scanned for contraband. The prisoner is then directed to return to his cell and face the back wall, with his hands touching the wall above his head.

Then the beatings begin, the affidavits say.

Brian Johnson says five officers entered his cell about 8 a.m., kicking and punching him and causing him to fall. As one grabbed his genitals, another put his head against the rim of the toilet, with his dreadlocks inside the bowl. An officer then grabbed him by the hair, he says in the affidavit.

Mr. Johnson was taken to Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital, where he received pain medication, a CT scan of his back and an X-ray of his heel, his affidavit says.

Six other inmates were taken to the same hospital, the affidavits say.

One, Anthony McNaughty, says four officers entered his cell and one placed him in a chokehold. He was then pinned face down on his bed, with an officer placing his knees on Mr. McNaughty's back, making it hard for him to breathe. The officers punched his head and face and one pulled on his fingers.

"I started screaming," Mr. McNaughty says.

He says that after being escorted to the medical unit, an officer again pulled on his fingers.

Hospital records show Mr. McNaughty had a chip fracture to his left hand.

Prisoners say they were accused of disobeying orders even though they say they never resisted.

Aaron Jackson says he stripped and faced the wall. "I complied. I said nothing," he says.

Officers then began punching his head, back and genitals — "It felt like they were all trying to get blows in," Mr. Jackson says. "They kept saying, 'Stop resisting' and 'This is our house.'"

Later, as he was led in handcuffs to the medical unit, CERT officers "took turns" punching and kicking him, he says.

Other prisoners had similar accounts of being punched as they were led through a gantlet of officers.

"As they walked me down the gallery," Travis Matthews says, "CERT officers took turns punching me in the face." He says he saw officers "do the same thing" to three other inmates.

Danielle Muscatello, a lawyer at Mr. Barket's firm, said some 20 prisoners who signed affidavits were cited for infractions in connection with the incident. Of those, she said, nearly half were found guilty and transferred to other facilities, including two near the Canadian border.

In the case of one prisoner, Sean Davis, a hearing officer did not believe the allegations.

Mr. Davis says three officers hit him with fists, feet and batons. He was cited for infractions like "assault on staff" and "refusing direct order," records show. At a hearing, a sergeant testified he had observed Mr. Davis in his cell and in the medical unit, and that the allegations were untrue.

"The evidence and testimony provided clearly shows that the incident that is described in misbehavior report is not accurate," the hearing officer wrote on Nov. 18.

Ms. Muscatello said she first learned of the beatings at Sing Sing from the mother of Anthony Grigoroff, a prisoner whose appeal she is handling.

When she visited Mr. Grigoroff a few days after the incident, she found him with a black eye and still appearing shaken.

He had heard that 60 to 70 prisoners were assaulted in the incident, Ms. Muscatello recalled. She asked him to provide her name to any prisoner who wanted to contact her, and soon she was hearing from the mothers and relatives of prisoners with similar accounts. "Family members just kept calling," Ms. Muscatello said.

She and a colleague began visiting Sing Sing and taking sworn statements from the men. They also attended their clients' interviews with federal authorities investigating the incident.

"Today I got a visit from 2 federal prosecutors and 2 special agents from the F.B.I. and with them was my lawyer," Mr. Poliandro, the prisoner who says he was pepper-sprayed, told his mother in a recent email. Ms. Muscatello confirmed Mr. Poliandro's meeting, but declined to discuss it.

Many of the prisoners who have joined the lawsuit still have years to go on their sentences.

But Mr. Capers, 25, is represented by different lawyers and said his assault occurred just days before he was ordered released by a Queens judge who found he was wrongly convicted in a murder case for which he had already served eight years of a 15-years-to-life sentence.

"He was an innocent kid trapped behind bars for a crime he didn't commit," said Elizabeth Geddes, a lawyer with one of the firms representing him. "When he finally reached the end of that very dark tunnel, officers decided to brutally beat him for no reason."

Mr. Capers, in the interview with *The New York Times*, said he complied with orders to strip to his boxers and place his hands high on the back wall of his cell before four officers and started beating him, and stomped on him after he fell. One, he said, bent his hands back.

"One officer is screaming, 'Break something — break something on him,'" Mr. Capers recalled.

He said that as he was led handcuffed behind his back to the medical unit, he was punched again, in the face, upper torso and stomach.

Mr. Capers said he did not try to defend himself, so that he would not incur a new charge that would imperil his release, which happened Nov. 17.

"I really wanted to get home," he said. "I didn't move an inch to even resist."

25 Feb - Tell Biden: Free Leonard Peltier!

On the 47th anniversary of Leonard Peltier's arrest in 1976, Lakota People's Law Project wrote about this seminal AIM activist's fight for freedom. Today, they're happy to say it's time to take action! Please send your demand to President Joe Biden and tell him it's long past time to free Leonard!

MORE:

Of Lakota and Ojibwe lineage and an Indian boarding school survivor, Leonard was accused of participating in the killing of FBI agents and convicted on false evidence. It's unconscionable that he's been left to rot in a federal penitentiary for nearly half a century. (Of course, Leonard refuses to give up hope. He's stayed active and on-message, even running for Vice President from his prison cell.)

Over the past year, we've been working in solidarity with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee to amplify their call for Leonard's freedom. Those who have also asked for Leonard's release include: the prosecutor who put him behind bars; Nobel Peace Prize winners Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Rigoberta Menchú; a former U.S. District Court judge; Sens. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT); Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ); and the 14th Dalai Lama.

This weekend, as our people celebrate the 50th anniversary of our standoff with oppressive colonial forces at Wounded Knee, it's an appropriate time to send our message of solidarity with Leonard to the president, loud and clear. Leonard exemplifies our strength and resilience, and he's never been afraid to stand up for Indigenous rights. His voice and courage helped pave the way for our ongoing resistance. This good man deserves our respect, and he deserves his liberty. Please tell President Biden to free Leonard Peltier today: action.lakotalaw.org/action/free-leonard

25 Feb - Illustrated Guide Version 16.1 Uploaded!

We've finished the latest version of the NYC ABC "Illustrated Guide to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War" and it's available for viewing (and download) by going to nycabc.wordpress.com/2023/02/25/guide_16_1 This update includes updated mini-bios, photos, and address changes for several prisoners.

25 Feb - Atlanta Activists Say Prosecutors Plan to Indict them on RICO Charges

Community organizations involved in the ongoing campaign to defend the South River Forest outside Atlanta, Georgia and 'Stop Cop City' say state prosecutors are planning on releasing indictments in the coming weeks charging them as a "criminal organization" under RICO statutes.

MORE:

by Ryan Fatica (*Unicorn Riot*)

The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, targets organized criminal enterprises and was created in the 1970s to more effectively prosecute the mafia. Since then, RICO statutes have been used against participants in the 2019 college admissions scandal, anti-abortion groups, insider traders, and now, environmental and climate justice activists.

Rather than charging individuals with specific crimes they committed, RICO indictments target alleged criminal organizations in which people collaborate together to commit a series of interrelated crimes in furtherance of a common criminal goal. For charges to stick, prosecutors must prove that those charged engaged in a "pattern of racketeering" activity involving "at least two acts" in furtherance of "one or more incidents, schemes, or transactions."

The Atlanta Solidarity Fund and Community Movement Builders, along with attorneys at the Civil Liberties Defense Center and Georgia attorney Donald F. Samuel made the announcement today after they became aware of information about the indictments.

This video was not produced or edited by *Unicorn Riot*. We are sharing it as part of our story on the Atlanta Solidarity Fund announcement.

Marlon Kautz, a member of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, explained that they believe the indictments are coming "based on a statement made by an Atlanta police officer." He also said that they "understand that an indictment against activists is forthcoming, likely in the coming week."

According to Kautz, the group's information is also "based on a conversation between a defense attorney who is representing activists and the state prosecutor assigned to those cases."

Unicorn Riot was unable to independently confirm the leaked information regarding the coming indictments.

The activists believe state prosecutors plan to charge them under Georgia's state-level RICO statute. Georgia recently leveraged its RICO statute to charge rappers Young Thug, Gunna and dozens of others for their alleged participation in a street gang known as Young Slime Life, or YSL. In that case, the Fulton County District Attorney alleged in their indictment that participants in the group engaged in a slew of criminal activities in furtherance of a common enterprise, including murder and multiple charges of aggravated assault and armed robbery.

Kamau Franklin, of Community Movement Builders, connected the RICO charges to efforts by law enforcement to repress the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement in the past:

"The city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia are working together to repress the Stop Cop City movement. Just as historically, the state has always tried to repress movements to fight for people's rights and Liberties. Just as in the past, it was the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement that was targeted by the state. Now we have movements today which are fighting against police violence and police militarization, which are also being targeted by the state. We must stand strong and stand together and fight against these efforts to repress our movement."

Kamau Franklin, Community Movement Builders

The Atlanta Solidarity Fund, a not-for-profit organization that provides resources to those facing state repression, may be one of the groups that prosecutors plan to target. Atlanta Solidarity Fund offers jail support for those in Atlanta who are arrested during protests, bails activists out of jail, and helps provide legal representation for activists charged with crimes. It is one of many such organizations currently doing this work around the country.

Such organizations routinely manage large sums of money that are donated to them from networks of activists and concerned people around the country. Bake sales, punk shows, online donations and other grassroots fundraising campaigns are frequently the main source of funding for such organizations, in addition to grants.

The Atlanta Solidarity Fund is a project of the Network For Strong Communities, a 501(c3) non-profit. In 2020, the most recent year about which information is available, the Network for Strong Communities reported \$3,614,028 in income from all its activities and fiscally sponsored organizations.

If found guilty, those charged under Georgia's RICO law face "not less than five nor more than 20 years' imprisonment" in addition to fines totaling "the greater of \$25,000.00 or three times the amount of any pecuniary value gained by him or her from such violation."

"The notion that RICO would be invoked to punish protestors engaged in a widely-supported challenge to a government decision is a leap in the wrong direction," said Don Samuel, a Georgia attorney who has written about RICO statutes and whose written statement was shared during the announcement.

"Threatening peaceful protestors with a seizure of their money and a twenty-year prison sentence not only mocks the purpose of the statute, it represents an assault on the most important and cherished rights of all American citizens: the right to protest, the right to seek redress of grievances, the right to enlist friends, colleagues, and the community to change government policy because the citizens want change [...] Threatening citizens with prosecution for doing so is anathema to the United States Constitution and violates the prosecutor's oath of office. And threatening protestors (even if they trespass or engage in civil disobedience) by labeling them 'racketeers' and 'terrorists' is the behavior of a prosecutor in desperate need of finding another job."

Don Samuel, Georgia attorney

Georgia RICO law names 42 specific acts that may be charged as part of a "pattern of racketeering activity," including homicide, kidnapping, burglary and arson, as well as any crime named under the federal RICO statute. It is unclear what criminal acts Georgia prosecutors plan to allege Atlanta activists engaged in.

Under the Georgia RICO statute, "acts of domestic terrorism" can also be used as proof of a "pattern of racketeering activity" as well as "any criminal attempt, criminal solicitation, or criminal conspiracy related thereto." Nineteen activists and forest defenders in Atlanta were recently charged under domestic terrorism statutes for their participation in the effort to defend the forest. It is unclear how those charges, which have been criticized for excessively criminalizing protest, may be linked to the potential RICO charges. Some of the domestic terrorism charges against activists are apparently based only on minor allegations like making social media posts, occupying a treehouse or running away from an arresting officer.

In addition to criminal charges, RICO statutes in Georgia allow for civil remedies, including seizing group and personal assets from those found guilty. A group's assets can be frozen prior to trial.

The Civil Liberties Defense Center, an Oregon-based legal non-profit that is assisting in legal efforts for the Atlanta campaign, said in a pre-recorded statement:

"Whenever political movements are successful, particularly when you are fighting against a massive police training facility that will train cops to maraud civilians and quell dissent, you should expect the state to utilize its power of repression against your growing movement. One way the state thinks it can crush environmental and social justice movements is by threatening, or attempting, to prosecute activists' organizations and campaigns for racketeering."

Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC)

The CLDC went on to say, "Know your rights, do not cooperate with the state to do harm to yourself, your comrades or the political movements you support, and trust that there is a strong and vigorous legal support structure in place to defend you, if needed."

Neither the Fulton County or DeKalb County District Attorney's Offices responded to *Unicorn Riot's* request for comment. The Georgia Attorney General's office could not be reached for comment.

26 Feb - FBI Harasses Activists in Florida; Two Indicted on Federal

On May 8, 2022, as the world waited anxiously for the Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade to drop, anonymous vandals smashed in the window of the Wisconsin Family Action building in Madison, Wisconsin and set the building ablaze. On the wall of the building, they scrawled the message, "If abortions aren't safe then you aren't either."

MORE:

by Ryan Fatica (*Unicorn Riot*)

"This was only a warning," wrote the attackers in an anonymous communique sent to journalist Robert Evans. "We demand the disbanding of all anti-choice establishments, fake clinics, and violent anti-choice groups within the next thirty days."

The arson and communique sent shock waves through the country and inspired a coast-to-coast campaign of more than 20 acts of sabotage and vandalism on the infrastructure of the anti-abortion movement — mostly against so-called "crisis pregnancy centers" (CPCs) and churches involved in anti-abortion activism.

More than nine months later, the federal government has announced the first prosecutions of Jane's Revenge vandals. But the two indicted on federal charges aren't accused of burning down any buildings, or even smashing any windows.

They're accused of graffiti.

Caleb Freestone and Amber Smith-Stewart, two community organizers in Florida, have been charged with one count each of Conspiracy Against Rights and two counts each of Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances, a law designed to prevent the blockading of abortion clinic entrances and the intimidation of those seeking abortions.

The indictment alleges that on May 28, June 26, and July 3, 2022 the pair spray painted slogans on the outside of three anti-choice centers reading, “If abortions aren’t safe neither are you” [sic], “Your time is up!! We’re coming for U” and “We are everywhere.”

For the past month, Freestone, Smith-Stewart and four other local activists have faced a campaign of targeted harassment from the FBI, according to several sources familiar with the incidents. FBI agents raided Smith-Stewart’s house in January. A week later, agents raided the home of another local activist.

At 6 a.m. on February 1, FBI agents claiming to have a no-knock warrant threw flash bang grenades and pointed automatic rifles at the activist and two teenage children who were also in the home at the time. Agents led the family out of the house at gunpoint. As of this writing, about a month later, the activist whose home was raided on February 1 has not formally been charged with anything.

FBI Agents have also shown up at activists’ places of employment, attempted to solicit information from activists’ parents, and sent at least one “target letter” indicating that the federal prosecutor involved in the case believes that the person either committed a crime or has information about a crime. One person was fired from their job shortly after the FBI visit.

Two of the agents involved in harassing the Florida activists are Special Agent Steven May and Special Agent Timothy Taylor.

Several activists and community organizers in Florida described living in fear, not knowing if they’ll be the next to be awoken at daybreak to the sound of flash bang grenades and the shouts of cops with rifles. “If a raid is gonna happen, I just want it to happen and be over with,” said one activist.

Activists familiar with the incidents have called it a “fishing operation,” in which agents, lacking any actual evidence, harass people and search their homes in hopes of getting someone to talk.

The Civil Liberties Defense Center, an Oregon-based nonprofit law firm specializing in criminal defense of activists, is representing Smith-Stewart in the case. “If convicted of the offenses, these two activists each face up to a maximum of 12 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and fines of up to \$350,000,” wrote CLDC staff attorney Sarah Alvarez in a statement shared with *Unicorn Riot*. “The allegations against our client amount to spray painted graffiti.”

In compiling its case, the FBI may be relying upon tips from far-right internet trolls. On January 26, three days after the raid on Smith-Stewart’s home, far-right, Proud Boy-connected social media troll Linda Catalina celebrated the indictments of Freestone and Smith-Stewart on the podcast she co-hosts with Isabella Rodriguez, claiming she had turned the pair in to the “clinic,” who passed the info on to the FBI.

“We knew who this guy was, we identified him, by the way,” said Catalina. “We sent it to the owners of Heartbeat Center, so you have us to thank if you go to jail and other people in the community who helped.”

Last week, Catalina posted on her Instagram that she was helping the anti-abortion center raise “\$10,000 to open up their 5th pregnancy clinic in Homestead, FL. Since 2007, Heartbeat of Miami has saved over 60,000 babies from ab*rtion.” [sic]

What Catalina may not be aware of is that when Donald Trump was president, he made changes to Title X, allowing for crisis pregnancy centers “to qualify for this federal ‘family planning’ funding.” And in 2019, “the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded \$1.7 million in Title X funds to the California fake clinic chain Obria Group and an additional \$1.7 million for each of the grant’s subsequent two years,” according to the Expose Fake Clinics national initiative.

Title X was created in 1970 to provide federal funding for comprehensive and confidential family planning services and preventive health care, prioritizing people and families with low-incomes. Under the Trump

administration, the purpose of Title X shifted from “acceptable and effective method[s] of family planning” to limiting “access to essential health care and information,” according to Physicians for Reproductive Health.

Despite their obvious dedication to political goals rather than reproductive health, the FBI apparently considers Heartbeat of Miami and other similar entities to be “reproductive health” centers under federal law. Now, for the first time in its history, continuing the legacy of the Trump administration, they’re targeting pro-choice activists with a federal law designed to protect abortion clinics from anti-abortion attacks.

Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act

In order to indict the two alleged graffiti artists on federal charges, the U.S. Attorney’s Office has leveraged a law created under the Clinton administration called the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, known as FACE, which prohibits in part “intentionally injuring, intimidating, or interfering with,” any person from “obtaining or providing reproductive health services.”

Dr. Susan Mezey, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Loyola University Chicago, studies reproductive rights and public policy. Dr. Mezey explained that FACE was created in response to a 1993 U.S. Supreme Court decision in which the Court refused to order federal injunctions against individuals who were harassing patients and staff at abortion clinics. Realizing the need to update federal law to protect the facilities, the U.S. Congress passed FACE in 1994.

According to Dr. Mezey, the legislation has been effective in pushing back on right-wing violence. “There is research that shows that there were fewer attacks after the legislation than before the legislation, and that the legislation seemed to have stopped most of the violent protests [against abortion clinics],” Dr. Mezey said. “Needless to say, any prosecutions that arose, arose against anti-abortion protesters.”

Dr. Mezey said that the law was written to be “viewpoint neutral.” In other words, it specifically targets neither those who want abortion to be legal, nor those who want it to be illegal. However, “the clear intent of the law was to make abortion providers accessible to women seeking abortions and to prevent the type of activity that was going on by the hundreds by anti-abortion activists,” Dr. Mezey explained.

As far as she knows, this is the first time FACE has been used to prosecute pro-choice activists.

“I don’t see how this fits in with the language of FACE,” said Dr. Mezey, referring to the vandalism Freestone and Smith-Stewart are accused of, “which is to ‘injure, interfere with, intimidate.’ None of that seems to be happening [here].”

The use of FACE legislation against the Florida activists hinges on the language “reproductive health services,” an ambiguous term that may have been clearer at the time the legislation was written. Although the legislators who created the law were intending to protect abortion clinics, since the law was passed, anti-abortion forces have proliferated a national network of CPCs claiming to provide reproductive health services.

“Such clinics are relatively new,” said Dr. Mezey, “most didn’t exist when FACE was passed.”

The first network of anti-abortion “pregnancy clinics” was founded in 1968, but their spread has increased since the mid-90s due in large part to support from Republican administrations, said Dr. Mezey.

Many such “clinics,” including the Respect Life Center in Hollywood, Florida, which Freestone and Smith-Stewart are accused of spray painting, do not even attempt to hide their anti-abortion political agenda. Their website contains selective information implying that abortion is both dangerous and traumatic.

“Abortion is a traumatic pregnancy loss,” the website reads. “The wound caused by abortion often remains unhealed and becomes a secret sorrow carried alone and without support.”

Crisis pregnancy centers can cause those seeking abortions to delay much-needed abortions, says Dr. Mezey. Under new abortion laws that impose strict time limits for legal abortions, such delays can lead to patients being unable to get abortions they need.

“Women seeking abortions who go to these places have to wait for a legally mandated ultrasound, and have to wait for a legally mandated physician’s lecture,” said Dr. Mezey. “And thus the time limit goes by. I think that’s terrible.”

Dr. Mezey said she’s not sure if graffiti has ever been charged federally, but if so, she’s never heard of it. “I’m sure there are Florida laws making it just a misdemeanor to deface property, so I don’t understand why the federal government has to get involved.”

Community organizers in Florida are asking themselves the same question.

“These protesters’ actions are as close to non-violence as you can get,” said Dr. Mezey. “Technically, I believe they broke the law. But I think there is a great imbalance of moral culpability. I think these people are reacting to a terrible decision by the Supreme Court in Dobbs. I understand their frustration.”

27 Feb - Updates on Alfredo Cospito

We have learned that the anarchist comrade Alfredo Cospito, who has been on hunger strike for 131 days, was moved by the medical department of the San Paolo hospital to the intensive care unit of the Milan Opera prison, where he was located before he was moved to San Paolo on February 11th.

MORE:

The hearing before the Supreme Court on February 24, in which the detention regulation in 41BIs was confirmed, finally confirmed the will of the state to destroy our companions – a will that already emerged in December with the result of the hearing before the surveillance court in Rome. The latest relocation from San Paolo to Opera is all about this will to exterminate. You intend to destroy a comrade and believe that it is a warning to the revolutionary struggle in this country. However, the intention is in vain: the need to fight against the state and the capital is insatiable, the desire to overthrow this authoritarian social reality is insatiable.

March 5th - "I am ready to die"

by Alfredo Cospito (*ORGANISE!*)

My struggle against 41 bis is the individual struggle of an anarchist, I don't give or receive orders. I simply cannot live in an inhuman regime like 41 bis, where I cannot freely read what I want, books, newspapers, anarchist periodicals, art and science magazines, as well as literature and history. The only possibility for me to get out is to renounce my anarchy and sell someone to take my place.

This is a regime where I can't have any human contact, where I can't even see or touch a blade of grass, or hug a loved one. A regime where photos of your parents are sequestered. A regime where you are buried alive in a grave in a position of death. I will carry on my struggle to the end, not for "duty" but because this is not life.

If the aim of the Italian state is to make me "dissociate" myself from the actions of anarchists outside these walls, then I will reject these demands, as a good anarchist. I believe that everyone is responsible for their own actions, and as a member of the anti-organisational current, I am not "associated" with anyone and therefore I cannot "dissociate" myself from anyone. Affinity is another matter. A coherent anarchist does not distance himself from other anarchists out of opportunism or convenience.

I have always proudly defended my actions (even in court, that's why I am here) and I have never criticised those of other comrades, much less when there is a situation like the one I find myself in.

The biggest insult for an anarchist is to be accused of giving or receiving orders.

When I was in the High Security regime, I also had censorship and I didn't issue any "pizzini" but articles to anarchist newspapers and magazines. And above all, I was free to receive books and magazines and write books, to read what I wanted, I was even allowed to evolve, to live.

Today I am ready to die to make the world understand what 41 bis really is. 750 people suffer it without protest, continuously vilified by the mass media. Now it is my turn: you have vilified me as the bloodthirsty terrorist; then you have sanctified me as the anarchist martyr who sacrifices himself for others; then you have vilified me again, like a terrible spectre. When it is all over, I shall no doubt be raised to the altars of martyrdom. No, thank you, I am not in the mood, I do not lend myself to your dirty political games.

In reality, the real problem for the Italian state is that all the human rights that are violated by this 41 bis regime, in the name of a "security" for which everything is sacrificed, will come to light. Good! You will have to think twice before putting an anarchist in here. I don't know what real motivations and political manoeuvres are behind it. And because someone has used me as a "poisoned apple" in this regime. It was quite difficult not to foresee what my reactions to this "non-life" would be. The Italian state is a worthy representative of the hypocrisy of a West that continually gives lessons in "morality" to the rest of the world. The 41 bis has given lessons that have been well taken up by "democratic" states such as Turkey (fellow Kurdish people know something about this) and Poland.

I am convinced that my death will be an obstacle to this regime and that the 750 who have been suffering from it for decades will be able to live a life worth living, whatever they have done. I love life, I am a happy man, I wouldn't trade my life for anyone else's life. And it is because I love it that I cannot accept this hopeless non-life.

March 6th - Latest Update

This morning the standard medical examination was carried out by a trusted doctor of the choice of lawyer F.Rossi Albertini, according to which Alfredo's health condition is irreversible.

After the decision not to revoke the 41bis, Alfredo – as he had said – automatically stopped taking the potassium supplements that he had to take just before the decision, in order to have time to hear it. He has lost another kilo, he has very noticeable muscle atrophy and abdominal cramps. The situation he is in is extremely painful. He is heading for a slow and painfully agonizing death. We are awaiting the results of the biochemical tests on a sample taken this morning. The doctor has requested that the next tests be done in the hospital, not at the prison hospital where he was rushed back last week. This is a critical week.

Let us not forget that the Italian government has now been invited by the UN to provide information on the conditions in which Alfredo is being held.

In addition to the demonstrations, the police have arrested and are currently holding 30-40 people from sweeping operations.

Old people have come out in the streets and are shouting about Alfredo and against the police.

1 Mar - Law is Politics By Other Means: Mumia Case Update

It has been 43 years. When is Mumia Abu-Jamal going to receive a new trial?

MORE:

Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Lucretia Clemons has the opportunity to overturn Mumia's conviction and grant a new trial. The time to do that is right now. The shocking new evidence that suggests bribery, perjury, and packing the jury with white jurors should be heard in open court. Evidence of constitutional violations in jury selection (a Batson claim) and suppression of evidence favorable to the accused (a Brady claim) was buried in the prosecutor's files for four decades. It is now before this court.

New Evidence found in Storage Closet No. 17 (in the basement of the DA's office) in 2021

- Alleged "eye witness" Robert Chobert's handwritten note to Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Joseph McGill after the trial demanding "where is the money that is owe to me."
- Detailed memos tracking of "eyewitness" Cynthia White's cases and notices for Joseph McGill (ADA) to be consulted when they are called.
- Handwritten voir dire notes from Joseph McGill (ADA) detailing the impermissible strike pattern targeting eligible black jurors over white jurors.

More of the Same, Yet Equally Shocking: Feb. 23, 2023 Exhibits Include:

Mumia's lawyers examined the District Attorney's files and found additional new evidence in early 2023. They submitted this to the court in a supplemental petition filed on Wednesday February 22, 2023. This filing is strategic. It is a roadmap for Judge Clemons to examine and expose the constitutional violations endemic in this case.

This is what we learned in the February filing:

- The District Attorney's office had in its "Mumia file" a preliminary hearing transcript for Cynthia White from 1987. Cynthia White (a purported eye witness to the killing of Officer Danny Faulkner) was charged with grand theft auto, and felony assault with a deadly weapon. Though found in the stolen car with the keys, she was not taken into custody. The victim told the court that the cops did not arrest her or take away the knife she threatened him with. This transcript clearly indicates that she was "working" as a prostitute with police protection six years after she testified against Abu-Jamal. It is all there in black and white. In addition, a Philadelphia Police Department homicide detective Douglas Culbreth, asked the court to release her on own recognizance – because she was a witness in a high-profile case. She had 17 previous failures to appear and the court speculated hundreds of arrests. The detective tried to have the conversation off the record, but the judge told him – "if you have something to say in my courtroom you will say it in open court."
- A handwritten description of the location on a hard drive of nearly all, i.e. the complete voir dire notes from ADA Joseph McGill. This note states the material was retained and scanned, yet these notes were never produced. The District Attorney's office says that their IT department has not yet been able to find the files on any retained computer hard drive.
- Losing, failing to turn over, and not having custody and control of Philadelphia Police Department files, of key Brady and Batson exculpatory evidence by this current DA's office or the past DA's should never be rewarded. Statements made to the court over the decades by the DA can and should be challenged i.e. "all of the relevant Brady evidence was turned over" – this was simply not true. It was not true in 1982 and it has not been true, until Larry Krasner took office. Constitutional violations and suppression of evidence has occurred in this case repeatedly over the last 40 years. Mumia's attorneys have never "waived" their right to this information. They have consistently and aggressively demanded full disclosure of documents and evidence that is favorable to the defendant that remained in the possession of the DA. This 2-22-23 supplemental submission includes and documents the impressive 1995 PCRA briefing by Abu-Jamal's legal team lead by Leonard Weinglass and local counsel David Rudovsky.

The question is: Will Judge Clemons bury the blatant evidence of prosecutorial misconduct by, stretching beyond any credibility, the byzantine PCRA hurdles in the law?

What happens now:

Presiding Criminal Division Judge Lucretia Clemons of the Philadelphia Common Pleas court said from the bench on Dec. 16, 2022 that she would rule in 60 - 90 days on Mumia's current PCRA claims for a new trial. The DA could file a response which would delay her ruling, or she could grant herself more time. Her pending order is a dismissal notice. She could a) make final the 907 dismissal notice b) grant a new evidentiary hearing c) order a new trial.

Whatever decision she makes, it will be appealed by one side or the other to the Superior Court.

When and if a new trial is ordered there will likely be additional litigation by third parties such as Maureen Faulkner (the officer's widow) and the Fraternal Order of Police. They will likely try to intervene and assert standing. They will attempt to argue that Larry Krasner is biased and should be removed. It should be noted that they secured standing but lost their argument before the PA Supreme Court when their King's Bench petition was heard. A special master was appointed and issued a report (adopted by the court) finding no bias on Krasner's part.

9 Mar - StopCopCity March

WHAT: #StopCopCity

WHEN: 4:00pm, Thursday, March 9th

WHERE: St. Patrick's Cathedral - 5th Avenue between East 50th & East 51st Streets

COST: FREE

MORE:

The Atlanta Police Foundation, corporations, and local officials are trying to destroy the Weelaunee Forest to build Cop City, where police from around the country will learn hyper-militarized tactics of repression. This forest plays a key role in mitigating climate change-driven heat waves and floods in the surrounding majority-Black communities. Cops killed one forest defender and arrested nineteen others on domestic terrorism charges for camping and living on the land. NYC activists committed to diverse causes ranging from prison abolition to gender justice to climate justice are coming together for a National Day of Action to demand justice for the police murder of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, #StopCopCity Forest Defender Tortuguita, and all others lost to and affected by police violence and terror.

10 Mar - Crush #33

WHAT: Reading Series

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, March 10th

WHERE: Woodbine - 585 Woodward Avenue, Queens

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join us for the 33rd installment of Crush, our reading series of poetry, prose, and miscellaneous text, hosted by Susan Goldenberg. Readers include: Sol Cabrini, Glynnis Eldridge, Allyson Erwin, Stefa Govaart, and No Land.

12 Mar - Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Fundraiser

WHAT: Benefit Dinner

WHEN: 7:00pm, Sunday, March 12th

WHERE: Woodbine - 585 Woodward Avenue, Queens

COST: \$5-50, no one turned away

MORE:

Please join Woodbine's Football Club for a Sunday night fundraising dinner to aid those impacted by the earthquake that has killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria.