



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for July 25th

27 Jun - Is this NYPD unit lashing out at New Yorkers?

In May, New Yorkers took to the streets in the wake of the killing of Jordan Neely, who was choked to death by fellow subway rider Daniel Penny on May 1.

MORE:

by NYCLU

Protesters showed up to demand accountability for Neely's killing and to call for the city to invest in necessities like mental health care and housing. NYPD officers showed up prepared for battle – and they have been aggressively cracking down on protests ever since.

The leading force behind the department's especially belligerent response to demonstrators is the Strategic Response Group. The SRG is a notoriously violent rapid response unit within the NYPD that has beaten and harassed protesters for years, while costing taxpayers \$133 million annually.

Plus, thousands of New Yorkers are serving long sentences because of New York's draconian sentencing scheme that requires judges to hand down lengthy terms. In a new piece, we explain why these sentences don't improve community safety and why reform is long overdue, especially for the children of people who are locked up: nyclu.org/en/news/how-mass-incarceration-destroys-ny-childrens-lives

8 Jul - Dr. Mutulu Shakur Lives in the Heart of the People

RIP, Mutulu!

MORE:

Born Jeral Wayne Williams on August 8th, 1950, he was a loving father and grandfather, revolutionary acupuncturist, human rights organizer and former political prisoner of war. Mutulu's life was transformative to the many people he organized, healed, mentored and inspired. Dr. Mutulu Shakur taught us that "people struggle for liberation because they love (the) people." He will always be remembered for his continued commitment to an independent and socialist New Afrika and for his battle cry, Straight Ahead! Information regarding a public service will be forthcoming.

July 20th - The Family Statement Honoring Dr. Mutulu Shakur's Life and Legacy

Dr. Mutulu Shakur, a highly esteemed acupuncturist, healer, revolutionary, and leader in the Black liberation movement, peacefully passed away on Friday, July 7, 2023 at 72 years old. He courageously battled multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that damages the bones and kidneys, since 2019. In December 2022, he was released on parole from federal prison, affording him the opportunity to spend his remaining days surrounded by loved ones. Having endured nearly 37 years of incarceration, his profound legacy will serve as a timeless inspiration for future generations.

Born Jeral Wayne Williams on August 8, 1950, in Baltimore, Maryland, Dr. Mutulu Shakur was raised in Jamaica, Queens, under the loving care of his blind mother. It was within the struggle of helping his mother navigate an unjust social service system that his political consciousness awakened. At the tender age of 16, he joined the New Afrikan Independence Movement, and in the late 1960s, he actively participated in the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a Black Nationalist group advocating for Black self-determination and socialist change across the nation. Driven by his unwavering commitment to the cause, Dr. Mutulu Shakur was a conscious citizen of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika. He was a leader of the Black Liberation Army (BLA), and worked closely with the Black Panther Party. He

was a founding member of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO) and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), acting as a pillar of strength and leadership.

While his revolutionary activism influenced countless lives, Dr. Mutulu Shakur also made groundbreaking contributions as an acupuncturist, affectionately known as "Doc." After receiving training in Canada and China, he obtained his license in California in 1979. Dr. Mutulu Shakur practiced holistic medicine with unwavering dedication, working tirelessly to empower his community. His journey started at Lincoln Detox, an addiction treatment program. The program was founded in 1970 in the South Bronx, by a coalition that included revolutionary healthcare workers, the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords and drug-addicted individuals seeking treatment.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur served as executive director and pioneered the use of acupuncture in treating withdrawal symptoms. His innovative five-point protocol, which remains widely used in addiction treatment today, brought relief and healing to countless individuals. In the late 1970s, he co-founded and co-directed the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (B.A.A.N.A.) and the Harlem Institute of Acupuncture, both established during a time when acupuncture faced legal challenges in New York. Dr. Mutulu Shakur's influential work in acupuncture continues to resonate in clinics and treatment centers across the globe.

In 1988, Dr. Mutulu Shakur faced a profound legal ordeal. He was convicted for leading a group of revolutionaries involved in a series of armed robberies in New York and Connecticut in 1981. The charges were brought against him under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act and included his role in the liberation of fellow activist Assata Shakur from a New Jersey prison in 1979. While incarcerated, Dr. Shakur was active in various prison programs and was a mentor to many within the system. He prepared a lot of young men on how to handle life in prison and for life after release.

Dr. Shakur was deeply influential in the social and political messaging of his sons' creative output. An ever-present mentor, even while imprisoned, he was instrumental in developing the Thug Code, which created a framework for the brothers' vision to create a social movement with the group THUG LIFE as the voice.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur is survived by his six children – Maurice "Mopreme" Shakur [Talia], Talib Shakur [Nichole], Ayize Jama-Everett, Sekyiwa "Set" Kai Shakur [Branden], Nzingha Shakur-Ali, and Chinua Mutulu Shakur. Additionally, he is fondly remembered by his six grandchildren — Nzingha Afeni Shakur, Malik Mutulu Shakur, Cheyenne Kai Harding, Tyrone Campbell, Cameron Rahmell Jackson and Mia Voight, his loving sisters Sharon Howell and Janice Ruth Williams, his brothers Sekou Odinga and Bilal Sunni-Ali, nieces and nephew — Nicole Howell, Sharon N. Williams, Tyree N. Williams and Chandra D. Williams-Phillips, and his godchildren — Aiyisha T. Obafemi, Chaka Zulu, Zayd Akinshegun Sefu Akinyela, Sulay Majid, Malika Majid, Ayesha Jabbar, Nora Hasna Majid, and Mohammedeen Majid. His former wife, Makini Shakur, and his son-in-law, Gregory Jackson (who he named Bahanee Lajah) are also cherished members of his family. Dr. Shakur was preceded in death by his mother, Dolores Porter, his revolutionary and spiritual father, Salahdeen (Aba) Shakur, his son, Tupac Amaru Shakur, godson, Yafeu Fula, his brothers Lumumba Shakur, Zayd Shakur and Wakil Shakur, his sister Fulani N. Sunni-Ali and his former wife, Afeni Shakur, a remarkable political activist, philanthropist, and Black Panther.

As we honor the life and legacy of Dr. Mutulu Shakur, let us remember him as a healer, an unyielding revolutionary, and an advocate for social change. His contributions as an acupuncturist and his unwavering dedication to the Black liberation movement will forever inspire generations to come. May his spirit of resilience and commitment guide us as we strive for a more equitable and just world.

12 Jul - One Little Square

This is an essay for an ADX program by Eric King.

MORE:

Eric is in a step-down unit of the ADX. It was determined it would be unconstitutional to release someone from ADX-level-deprivation to the streets, so the ADX created a special unit for people within a year of their release. They are supposed to be able to earn privileges to help them adjust to the outside world. They have specialized caseworkers that help them know what kind of programming they're eligible for, they can get phone calls, they can get snacks, they can earn a lot of things.

Eric has not been OFFERED and programming. Through other prisoners, Eric found out about a program (all by himself) in which he could write essays for treats and submit them to psych. Eric asked for a "nutella" for the reward for this essay.

(Eric has just made his third phone call since August when he arrived. And his third phone call since 12-2018 as a part of another program for prisoners that are on sanctions. Being on sanctions at ADX is a double whammy you are subject to the almost absolute communication restrictions as well as disciplinary sanctions from whatever incidents land them there. Predominantly these sanctions are removed when they hit the ADX although the lucky thing like Eric get to keep theirs)

A few months ago, while I was in C-unit, all of the power went out, including all the outside flood/alarm lights...although the lights were only down for about 30 minutes, they opened up a whole universe for me.

There's a very skinny window in all of our cells, most of them face a brick wall and nothing else...This is true of c-unit...where our windows face what I assume is the back of another unit...however, at the very top of the unit window is about 2 in by 3 in of "sky."

During normal times these few inches of sky are mostly useless...you can see a little of the sky, but the big ass flood lights kill any joy. Reminding you your freedom daydreams are a waste of time. During the evening that sliver of sky becomes a terror, burying you with light...if you don't cover up your window at night, you're basically having eight flashlights blasting you in the face.

Things all changed during the-night-without-light (NWL)...During the NWL, I looked out the window and nearly fainted. The entire 2x3 was painted with stars, seemingly more than I could count... It was like having a bowl of freedom ice cream, double scoop. All the wonders of the universe inviting my gaze, they've been hiding there all along!

looking up at the stars is a passion of mine. My Da was a partial astronomer with an amazing telescope who would take photos of the planets and other galaxies. He and my Ma would sit/stand on the balcony, enjoying life with the celestial wonders...Just taught me to love all those sparkling stars. We can take so much joy from the wonders around us...It's free and delightful!

One of the worst parts about prison has been losing the Stars. The last time I got to stargaze was at night at Florence medium, 5 years ago. Me and the amazingly wonderful (and now free) Jerry Burkholder. Big J would walk back from evening wreck at the library... My neck cleaned up engaging and thoughtful convo... It was as good as non-visiting day prison could be...Big Jay would let me ramble and point out Stars, he'd share interesting things about Lilith or similar topics. And I would feel semi-complete. God, I miss that guy, our walks, the Stars, the visits...

Staring out my windows sliver I felt all of the above. I could feel my wife beside me, looking at the same stars, feeling the same awe our oldest ancestors felt. 30 minutes of sorrowless, thoughtful introspection... Me, my family and the universe.

13 Jul - Another contractor drops Cop City

It's confirmed: Atlas Technical Consultants, one of the largest contracting firms in the country, has cut ties with Cop City.

MORE:

This comes after months of protests, office demonstrations, and phone floods targeting Atlas and the investment firm that owns them, GI Partners.

Rumors about Atlas ditching Cop City began when protestors caught an Atlas manager on camera saying that the company was no longer working on the project. In that video the Atlas employee admitted that it was due to the nonstop pressure they were facing from activists. On Monday, Atlas released an official statement (written in corporate double speak) saying that they no longer were part of the Cop City project.

This is a huge victory for the Stop Cop City movement, and a reminder that our solidarity protests have a real impact. Atlas is the third contractor to cut ties with Cop City, following Quality Glass Company, and Reeves Young Construction.

Let's build on this momentum and keep up the pressure! We need to continue taking action against the other corporations that back Cop City. Top targets include Nationwide Insurance, which is insuring the construction of Cop City, and Cadence Bank which has provided a \$20 million construction loan. Find targets in your community and organize a demonstration or protest! You can also make calls to targets and demand that they cut ties with Cop City.

Another effective tactic is to publicly close your accounts at the banks and corporations who are backing Cop City. Moving your money, and divesting yourself from Cop City, is an important way to show your solidarity with frontline resistance in Atlanta. Have an account at Cadence Bank, Nationwide, Bank of America, or other Cop City corporate sponsors? Pledge to publicly close these accounts. We will follow up with next steps!

13 Jul - Family of activist killed in alleged 'spray of bullets' by US police files lawsuit

Michael Reinoehl, an anti-fascist activist wanted in fatal shooting, was killed by police who never announced themselves, suit alleges

MORE:

by Dani Anguiano (*The Guardian*)

The family of Michael Reinoehl, an anti-fascist activist killed by police in 2020 while wanted for fatally shooting an Oregon man during a pro-Trump rally, have filed a lawsuit alleging his civil rights were violated when officers "sprayed more than 40 bullets" outside the apartment complex where he died.

The federal lawsuit filed on behalf of his children alleges that police killed Reinoehl at the apartment complex in Lacey, Washington, without ever identifying themselves. His family is seeking compensation for pre-death pain and suffering experienced by Reinoehl and for his two children, who they say suffered "permanent and irreparable emotional injury" from their father's death and the "highly publicized, sensational and political nature" of his killing.

"The actions of the officers, before, during, and after the shooting, show that they either had no plan to arrest the man without injury, made no effort to follow such a plan, or planned to use deadly force from the start," the lawsuit states.

The controversial circumstances around Reinoehl's killing have long raised questions, particularly after witnesses and law enforcement officers offered conflicting accounts of what occurred and whether officers identified themselves.

A taskforce led by the US Marshals Service, which was involved in Reinoehl's death, previously determined that he had been shot and killed after firing a round from a handgun. However, more than 20

witnesses interviewed by the New York Times said they did not hear officers identify themselves or give commands before they started shooting.

Donald Trump, who was president at the time, praised Reinoehl's death, calling it "retribution", and said the US marshals "didn't want to arrest him".

The activist's killing came after a summer of unrest in Portland with widespread racial justice protests following the murder of George Floyd, and clashes between far-right groups and leftist protesters.

In one such confrontation, Aaron "Jay" Danielson, a far-right activist, was killed at a pro-Trump car caravan in downtown Portland on 29 August. Trump immediately seized on Danielson's killing, arguing Portland was a lawless city out of control and urging police to arrest his killer.

Reinoehl, a father of two who said he provided "security" at Black Lives Matter protests in Portland, told *Vice News* in an interview that he had killed Danielson while acting in self-defense. He said that he had come to the aid of a friend who was surrounded by Trump supporters in what he said was a heavily armed caravan and that a man threatened him and a friend with a knife.

"I had no choice. I mean, I, I had a choice. I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of color. But I wasn't going to do that," he said.

Members of the US Marshals Service, the FBI and state and local law enforcement located Reinoehl in Washington on 3 September. The taskforce which oversaw the operation told law enforcement that Reinoehl would be violent and "he would not be taken alive", according to documents published by *Vice*.

Officers cornered Reinoehl in his Jetta and fired their weapons, with one officer shooting through his own windshield, according to the lawsuit. The 48-year-old "ducked and ran away from the threat, looking for cover", the lawsuit states, but made it only a few yards before being "surrounded and gunned down". He was struck by at least five bullets, according to the lawsuit.

"Law enforcement officers dressed in militia-style fatigues raced a short distance through a quiet residential neighborhood in three unmarked SUVs toward their target: a man they were supposed to arrest," the lawsuit states. "Without any warning or announcement that they were police, four officers opened fire with automatic assault rifles and handguns."

Authorities have said Reinoehl tried to fire at officers during the incident, but the lawsuit filed by Reinoehl's family says that he never even took the gun out of his pocket.

A prosecutor in Washington opted not to file criminal charges against the officers who killed Reinoehl. A judge last year dismissed a federal lawsuit filed by Danielson's estate against the city of Portland and local officials.

14 Jul - While Doing Time in a California Prison, I Was Given a Hysterectomy Without My Consent

Moonlight Pulido believed she was having surgery to remove growths from her uterus. In a brutal bait-and-switch, she was sterilized.

MORE:

by Moonlight Pulido as told to Carla Canning (*The Marshall Project*)

In 2005, when I was eight years into a life sentence at Valley State Prison, a prison doctor named James Heinrich informed me that my annual Pap test had shown two potentially cancerous growths on my uterus. My thoughts immediately went to my son Michael, who had been diagnosed with cancer at age 12.

Heinrich asked if I wanted surgery to have the growths removed. Since I knew that treatments and miracles were unlikely for me in prison, I saw this as a necessity. I didn't know to ask for a second opinion or if there was such a thing for women in my facility.

About a week and a half later, I was transported to Madera Community Hospital, which has since been closed. I was prepped for surgery, wearing a gown and hooked up to an IV, when medical staff presented me with paperwork to sign. They put it on a little table next to me and handed me the pen. The nurse was waiting with the anesthesia syringe.

It didn't occur to me in the moment to sit there and read the whole document. I thought I was getting a lifesaving procedure, so I just signed the papers. To this day, I don't know exactly what they said.

When I woke up, I was lying in the hospital bed, coated in sweat. At first, I thought it was just my body reacting to the surgery, or maybe the anesthesia. But it continued for days, even after I'd left the hospital and returned to prison.

When I went back to medical to have my dressing changed, I asked the nurse about it. She took a look at my file and told me that I'd had a full hysterectomy. I remember thinking, No, she must be mistaken. She asked for my name to confirm with the medical records, then assured me that I, DeAnna Henderson, as I was still called at the time, had been sterilized.

I didn't know how to react. I just left and didn't say anything to anyone. I was embarrassed. I felt hollow, like less than myself. Like something fundamental had been taken from me, something that was important and grounded me to Mother Earth.

Two or three days later, I walked back into the doctor's office ready to demand answers. I sat down and asked quietly, "What did you do to me?" I remember Heinrich closing the door and telling me that he was tired of pretty, non-White girls getting locked up, getting pregnant, having children, and getting locked up again. "You have these kids, and taxpayers have to take care of them," I recall him saying. Once again, I just got up and left. I went back to my unit, stunned into silence. I felt entirely alone, like I couldn't ask for help or do anything about it.

Last January, once I was paroled, I started working with California Coalition for Women Prisoners, an organization that is helping people like me get reparations from the state of California. I saw a list of others who had been sterilized and recognized the names of women I'd shared a prison bunk with, lived alongside and slept underneath.

Soon after my release, I filled out the application to the California Victim Compensation Board by hand and sent it in the mail. The process was so overwhelming. I just tried to center myself and just take each question one at a time.

Three weeks later, they wrote me back to say that my application was being processed. I found out that I was approved, and that they'd be issuing a check. I cried when I got that \$15,000. It made it all feel real and like it had finally been acknowledged. But that check doesn't change what happened to me and all of those other women. This doctor took so much from us. He stole our ability to create and give life, and he played God by deciding who was suitable to have children.

17 Jul - US attorney in Manhattan seeking federal takeover of city's troubled Rikers Island jail complex

A federal prosecutor said Monday his office is seeking to have control of New York City's trouble-plagued Rikers Island jail taken away from Mayor Eric Adam's administration, calling conditions there a "collective failure with deep roots."

MORE:

by *Associated Press*

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams of the Southern District of New York said Rikers "has been in crisis for years" over several mayors' administrations and leaders of the corrections system and he favors a court-appointed outside authority to take charge of the complex.

"But after eight years of trying every tool in the toolkit, we cannot wait any longer for substantial progress to materialize," he said in a statement, adding that his office would seek to have a court-appointed receivership put in place.

Adams has resisted the idea of a federal takeover of the system and has said his administration has been taking steps to stabilize Rikers, which was hit hard by the pandemic.

In an email response, a spokesperson for City Hall said the administration's efforts had been having a positive impact in some areas that a federal monitor had noted and questioned what had changed. Williams said his office would pursue contempt proceedings against the city after a court-appointed monitor last week filed a report saying the city hadn't met its obligations under a series of court orders pertaining to conditions inside Rikers.

In that report, the monitor said the "pace of reform has stagnated" and that jail officials had failed to report incidents of violence.

Another report earlier this month condemned conditions at jail facilities, citing mold- and vermin-infested areas among other issues.

In a hearing in June, U.S. District Judge Laura Taylor Swain told attorneys for the city and Rikers detainees to formally discuss a potential structure for a federal receivership, and said she would consider it in August.

Advocates for those detained at Rikers have loudly called for a receivership, citing grim realities such as the deaths of 19 people last year, following 16 the year before. Six people have died so far this year.

The Legal Aid Society praised Williams' decision to push for federal oversight saying in a statement, "Too many lives have been lost and damaged due to the city's inability to manage the jails humanely. We look forward to working together to seek the relief necessary to end this culture of brutality."

17 Jul - Urgent Call For Support! Donate to the Kill the Bill Prisoners' Fund!

In March 2021 in Bristol, UK, the rage against the abuse and oppression by the police boiled up during a demonstration against a new policing bill introduced by parliament, resulting in militant protests, arrests, and now imprisonment.

MORE:

via *UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL*

When police attacked protesters fought back defending themselves against pepper spray, batons, shields and charges on horseback. By the end of the evening, several police vehicles had been set alight.

The 'outrageous' action of defending themselves caused the police to seek revenge, and they have been targeting the community ever since. Over 78 people have been arrested and 50 or more have been charged. At least 29 people have been sentenced to time in prison, with sentences ranging from just a few months to up to 14 years.

Bristol ABC has been handling the support work for all prisoners from the Kill The Bill protests. Since the beginning of their fundraiser they have managed to gather over 50k GBP, but last month they published an urgent call for support as their money reserves were dropping rapidly.

They send £50 per month to each individual prisoner currently serving time, which is used for topping up phone credits and other essential items in prison. There are twenty current prisoners, which means they use £1000 a month. They only have £2000 left in their accounts, so they are in a really dire situation.

As well as the £50 allowance, they also support released prisoners, families of prisoners and folks doing prison visits.

Please, consider sending just a few coins to Bristol ABC. *UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL* has a combined 20k people reach. If all of their followers sent 1 coin, they would reach the 70k GBP they want to raise.

You can read more about the fundraiser, see how money is being used and donate at gofundme.com/f/ktb-prisoner-support-fund You can read about the work Bristol ABC is doing at bristolabc.org And you can find KTB prisoner addresses at bristolabc.org/prisoners

21 Jul - Ruchell Cinque Magee is Coming Home!

After 67 years of wrongful imprisonment, the Coalition to Free Ruchell Magee is proud and overjoyed to announce that Ruchell Magee has won his release from California Medical Facility.

MORE:

The Coalition to Free Ruchell Magee, which has fought to win Ruchell's freedom since 2019, salutes Cinque! We also send our profound gratitude to every organization and supporter who attended an event, took an action, wrote a letter to Ruchell, or did anything to uplift his struggle. We will continue to support Ruchell in his return and post updates.

We have gathered over 37,700 signatures, over 2,600 letters, and countless calls to Governor Newsom and letters to Ruchell. Ruchell's relentless work and fortitude and the collective power of the people were decisive factors in raising awareness about Ruchell's history and bringing this issue to the forefront.

We must be clear that Ruchell has been the main driver of his own release. This release will allow him to spend the rest of his life outside of prison walls, with his loved ones.

We in the Coalition hope that this monumental victory will inspire increased commitment to the release of all of our political prisoners. We reaffirm our support for justice for all political prisoners across the US, and we will not give up the fight.

July 23rd - Ruchell Magee Re-Entry Fund

Please help Ruchell Magee's re-entry after almost 67 years of incarceration. At 84 years old, he is facing formidable health issues, but we are thankful that he will be able to live his life outside the torturous conditions of prison. Our goal is to raise \$500 for each of the 67 years he has been locked up, for a total of \$33,500. These funds will help provide him with the basic necessities and medical support he requires, and will ensure that his comforts are met and his family is not heavily burdened with expense. Thank you so much for your support: fundrazr.com/82E6S2

23 Jul - Illustrated Guide Version 16.5 Uploaded!

https://nycabc.wordpress.com/2023/07/23/guide_16_5

MORE:

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 visiting the link at the top of this post. This update includes updated mini-bios, photos, and address changes for several prisoners. This update also includes the release of Dan Baker. Welcome home, comrade! fundrazr.com/DanBaker2023

23 Jul - "Concrete coffins:" Surviving extreme heat behind bars

Sweltering doesn't even describe it.

MORE:

by Jamiles Lartey (*The Marshall Project*)

This week, more than a third of the U.S. population was under excessive heat warnings and heat advisories. Dozens of major cities and states have set new temperature records in recent weeks, including Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which logged its hottest June ever.

Less than an hour from the city is Louisiana State Penitentiary, better known as Angola prison, where the state set up a temporary youth jail last fall, in a building that once housed adults awaiting execution.

A federal court filing this week from the Louisiana American Civil Liberties Union alleges that the youth at Angola face inhumane conditions, in large part because they are regularly kept in non-airconditioned cells for up to 72 hours. In a statement to the court, medical expert Dr. S. Vassallo called the practice "foolhardy and perilous," and said, "I would not dare to keep my dog in these conditions for fear of my dog dying."

This June and July at the prison, the heat index has regularly exceeded 125 degrees, which the National Weather Services classifies as "extreme danger" for heat-related illness and death.

In 2021, Louisiana spent \$2.8 million to study what it would cost to cool all of its prisons with air conditioning, but it is still waiting on results. In the meantime, adults at Angola — the state's largest facility — struggle for relief. "It's over 100 degrees in there. I lie on the floor. I barely can breathe. God, it feels like it's suffocating!" an unidentified person told *The Advocate*.

It's hardly just a Louisiana problem. Texas is the state most frequently tied to prison heat, as it is both the largest state prison system in the country, and one of the hottest states on average, second only to Florida. More than two-thirds of Texas state prisons do not have air conditioning in their living quarters. In May, state senators killed a bill — which had passed the state House — that would have invested half a billion dollars into air conditioning prisons over the next eight years.

Texas hasn't officially declared a heat-related death behind bars since 2012, but a November study in the *Journal of American Medicine* concluded that 271 deaths in Texas prisons between 2001 and 2019 "may be attributable to extreme heat days." A separate nationwide study released this week found that for every 10 degrees above the average summer temperature, prison deaths increase by 5.2%.

The Texas prison system does have a program for sorting out which people are most sensitive to the heat and transferring them to so-called "cool beds" at prisons with air conditioning, largely because of lawsuits. Those left behind describe the conditions as torture.

Last month, *The New York Times* interviewed more than a dozen currently and formerly incarcerated people about the "effort at survival" behind bars during extreme heat. Several reported flooding their cells and lying on the wet concrete for relief, while others scream or light fires to draw attention from guards. In a newsletter about heat in prisons last summer, we covered some more of the desperate and inventive methods that people employ to survive the heat.

In a powerful essay earlier this month for *Prism Reports*, Kwaneta Harris, who is in prison in Texas, writes that women in her unit regularly engage in self-harm just to be transferred to the air-conditioned psychiatric unit, a tactic that guards try to dissuade with threats of tear gas. She also notes the dramatic increase in the cost of bottled water in the prison store in the depths of the heatwave. "I guess price gouging is legal when the state is the gouger and prisoners are the customers. This all contributes to desperation," Harris writes.

Corrections officers don't spend as much time in prisons as incarcerated people, but many still face punishing conditions from the heat. It's not uncommon for guards to work 12- or 14-hour shifts outfitted in a bulky stab-proof vest, the head of an officer's union in Texas told *KXAN-TV*. "It's comparable to if you go

buy the heaviest coat possible, put that coat on and go to Texas Memorial Stadium and run up and down the stairs constantly," Executive Director Jeff Ormsby told the station.

Corrections officials and lawmakers throughout the South have cited non-airconditioned prisons as a major impediment to hiring officers. As my colleague Maurice Chammah recently told *PBS News Hour*, "Part of that is that they don't want to live through the heat, but part of it is also the corrections officers don't want to live with the increased levels of violence, of suicide, and other problems that are in a prison during these hottest summer months."

Staff shortages, in turn, can worsen punishingly hot conditions. At the Dauphin County Prison in central Pennsylvania, prisoners have been on lockdown through most of July due to staffing issues, according to county officials. That means people spend 23 hours a day in cells with no ventilation, air conditioning or windows. Lack of staff can also hamper access to the "heat mitigation" strategies that most prison systems employ, which include access to ice, extra showers, and fans.

Even facilities with air conditioning can face dangerous heat when those systems fail. That was the case on Tuesday at the Perryville women's prison complex in Arizona, where some evaporative coolers failed. Indoor temperatures quickly climbed as high as 98 degrees, and women there told *KPNX* that the cells were like "concrete coffins."

27 Jul - Opposition: Black Mask, Ben Morea, & U.A.W.M.F.

WHAT: Book Release Party

WHEN: 6:00pm, Thursday, July 27th

WHERE: 22 Eldridge Street, 2nd Floor, NYC

COST: FREE

MORE:

Please join Boo-Hooray and Fugitive Materials for the release party for Opposition: Black Mask, Ben Morea, & U.A.W.M.F., an updated edition of the long out-of-print 2014 catalog dedicated to Morea's political and artistic activities throughout the 1960s. The party will also celebrate the closing of Morea's exhibition Ben Morea: Full Circle, 1964–Present.

6 Aug - MACC Care Assembly

WHAT: Assembly

WHEN: 3:00pm, Sunday, August 6th

WHERE: PIT Records & Books, 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

SCHEDULE:

- Self-defense class Muay Thai Martial arts training - no experience necessary, show up at 3 pm
- Political education session
- Care exchange & a community meal

What is the care exchange? As we sit down to share a meal we check in and exchange our requests and offers, in the spirit of mutual aid. Requests – do you need help with anything? Offers – do you have any skills, time, or resources to offer? This is a conversation to help facilitate building and maintaining relationships among us by identifying needs and sharing what we can in solidarity.

For COVID safety: masks required; please test within 48 hours ahead of the meeting if possible; free tests will be provided at the door.