



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for October 17<sup>th</sup>

## **2 Oct - Update on Eric's Release Date and His Fundraiser**

*Due to years of medical neglect in prison, Eric is currently suffering from health problems.*

### **MORE:**

via *UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL*

We hope Eric gets better soon, that he is released and can get the medical help he needs. Eric release from federal prison is set for February 2024.

If you want to support Eric, you can help him start his life outside prison walls by donating to his release fund, which is close to reaching its goal.

A while ago Eric wrote a text about ABC Running Down the Walls. The text is an important reminder of the value of prisoner support. In Eric's own words:

*"I give the biggest solidarity and warmest hugs to all those who in any way do what they can to help those inside. No matter the custody level or length of the bid, prison exposes you to the worst society has to offer, and the people who care expose us to the best. Thank you all for caring. I hope the weather is nice!"*

## **2 Oct - A call to action for Books Through Bars this month**

*Normally Books Through Bars NYC would be writing around the first of the month to announce a new selection of books to purchase. But as we enter into Banned Books Week, this October they want to highlight the kinds of censorship happening at U.S. prisons.*

### **MORE:**

Not just the kinds that single out certain titles, but wholesale efforts by departments of corrections to thwart organizations like Books Through Bars from fulfilling requests from incarcerated readers.

Just in the last few months both Missouri and Texas are creating more obstacles for those incarcerated from receiving books. In Missouri, the state DOC is prohibiting all books sent by friends or loved ones, requiring incarcerated readers to purchase through approved vendors (READ: Amazon). And more troubling is Texas's decision to put on hold receiving ALL books sent by books-to-prison programs like Books Through Bars until they are RE-vetted and approved (despite being around for decades in this capacity). This is part of a larger lockdown Texas has put its incarcerated population into, claiming to crack down on drugs and contraband, while also rolling out a digital mail program to eliminate other forms of physical correspondence. The end result--at least for the time being--is that it is harder for Texas state incarcerated readers to request titles, and impossible for them to receive (creating a backlog for Books Through Bars and others).

Instead of posting a new bundle of titles (we will get back to that in November), we direct your generosity towards the Books Through Bars NYC donation page so they can continue their efforts to both help readers behind bars get access to books and to raise public awareness for these programs so this kind of banning is stopped in its tracks: [booksthroughbarsnyc.org/](http://booksthroughbarsnyc.org/).

If you did purchase a bundle in the last couple of days, we will add those to the larger September order we will be placing for drawing books (one of Search Press's "How to Draw in Simple Steps" ), Hand-Lettering for Everyone, and a selection from the Idiot's Guide series related to the tiny house movement, music proficiency, and practical alchemy.

### 3 Oct - Indicting anarchism, inventing 'terror': From 1898 to Cop City

*State propaganda has long mischaracterized and scapegoated anarchism to maintain a violent status quo.*

#### **MORE:**

by William C. Anderson (*Prism Reports*)

*"Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial ... Gentlemen of the jury, convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society."* – Julius S. Grinnell, prosecuting attorney of the Haymarket Martyrs

*"Peaceful protesters should be protected—but arsonists and anarchists should be prosecuted—and local law enforcement can do that."* – Joe Biden

News of the indictment of 61 people in the fight against the construction of the militarized police training facility in Atlanta dubbed "Cop City" has left many in shock. Seeing dozens charged under the state's racketeering, or RICO statute, was confusing enough since authorities are targeting a decentralized movement using a law meant for highly organized crime. However, what left many people even more perplexed was how the 109-page indictment included descriptions of anarchism. It states early on that "violent anarchists attempt to frame the government as violent oppressionists, thereby justifying the anarchists' own violence." Words like these echo some of the worst days of political repression in the history of anarchist movements worldwide and should concern anti-fascist organizers today.

What we're witnessing is a resurgence of the worst fascistic impulses, and it's happening under a Democrat president in a Democrat-controlled city with overwhelming Black representation. While conservative school boards are banning books and the right is suppressing history and education, we must educate about what led up to this point. What's happening in Atlanta dates back well over a century to the original "war on terror," which was a global war against anarchism. These events defined national and international policing apparatuses.

In September 1898, Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni assassinated Elisabeth, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary. Some anarchists, like Lucheni, used the "propaganda of the deed," or targeted violence such as assassination, to catalyze a revolutionary uprising. By the end of that year, politicians, members of the ruling class, and authorities worldwide were concerned enough about anarchism to call for an international conference. It led to convening in Rome dubbed the "International Conference for the Defense of Society against the Anarchists." Richard Bach Jensen notes in his book "The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism" that the agreements reached at this nearly month-long conference played a "key role in the quarter-century-long international campaign against anarchism." Jensen points out that "facilitation of inter-European police cooperation was the most important result" of the anti-anarchist conference and traces its influence on developing international policing agencies like Interpol. This was followed by the development of another infamous policing agency that credits anarchism for its creation.

After self-professed anarchist Leon Czolgosz killed U.S. President William McKinley, incoming President Theodore Roosevelt launched a domestic campaign against anarchism and tapped Charles Bonaparte (the grandnephew of Napoleon) to develop the policing organization that would ultimately become the FBI. Roosevelt stated explicitly to Congress that the state needed to "war with relentless efficiency not only against anarchists, but against all active and passive sympathizers with anarchists," whom he labeled a "body of criminals who object to all governments, good and bad alike."

The war against anarchists would later shape much of the First Red Scare and be marked by anti-immigrant legislation, such as the 1903 Anarchist Exclusion Act. The 1919-20 Palmer Raids conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice led to the arrest and deportation of thousands of labor organizers; Italian, Eastern European, and Jewish immigrants; and prominent anarchists like Emma Goldman. Herein lies the era that illustrates the origins of the policy, policing, and strategic persecution used against anti-fascist organizers and radicals today.

The FBI website itself states, “anarchists, in a sense, were the first modern-day terrorists.” This helps us understand how anarchism (and “anarchy” as a term) became erroneously synonymous with terror, chaos, and disorganization. The tactic has been employed in notorious moments like the trial of the Haymarket Martyrs following the 1886 Chicago Haymarket bombing and the trial of Italian immigrant anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. High-profile cases like these captured national and even international attention and were used to create an anarchist bogeyman that still lingers. This historical context clarifies what’s being levied against “Stop Cop City” protesters.

Tragedy, exploitation, and societal problems are all ripe opportunities to create a scapegoat. Those shouldering the blame have often been “anarchists” by association, choice, or indictment. That is to say, like “terrorist,” it doesn’t always matter if one is ideologically an anarchist or not because the authorities weaponized the term to aid prosecution. Therefore, using a RICO statute in Atlanta mirrors an antiquated police tactic that’s just as seasoned as it is devious.

Misunderstanding anarchism is a central part of stigmatizing it in the courtroom, social movements, and historical renderings. Anarchism is easily one of the left’s most mischaracterized and obscured sections. Instead of seeing it as an umbrella term for socialists, communists, and radicals who ideologically oppose state-building and state reform, critics have maligned it as immature adventurism, terror, and individualistic nihilism. While those elements certainly exist within some anarchist factions, overemphasizing them has been a propagandistic project to many across the entire political spectrum, and the general public has fallen victim to it too. It’s arguable that popular misinformation in this regard is part of what makes it easy to manipulate from a legal standpoint. Anarchism’s breadth, decentralization, and autonomy, even as a politic, render it vulnerable to distortion. The prosecution pursuing Stop Cop City and Defend the Atlanta Forest activists are already using this to their advantage in an all-too-familiar way.

The state of Georgia’s use of the RICO statute against the defendants has also provided some punitive flexibility, which isn’t new. During the height of what became known as the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) cheating scandal, Fulton County then-Assistant District Attorney Fani Willis targeted educators using RICO. Accusing educators of correcting students’ answers on standardized testing didn’t amount to the conspiracy it was portrayed as, but it was still used nonetheless. The DA tapped RICO expert John Floyd, who argued that, “the educators had joined in a conspiracy and used the school system as a criminal enterprise.” In the teachers’ case, 35 were charged with RICO because of their affiliation with APS. The educator’s salaries were used as evidence of material gain. Guilt by association allows RICO to turn anyone and anything into a criminal syndicate.

Now, the most basic acts of protest, movement-building, and solidarity are being criminalized. This isn’t new because criminalizing protest has been expanded exponentially in the face of growing movements against environmental destruction and state violence. In recent years, almost all 50 state governments and the U.S. Congress “have considered the implementation of 246 anti-protest bills, 39 of which have been enacted in 20 states.” The stakes are extremely high because if what the prosecution is trying to accomplish works, the state will use it beyond Georgia too.

“The spread of anarchist ideas is conducted through word of mouth, internet, and written form,” the indictment said. It goes on to say some of those being charged work to promote “the false idea that the group is non-violent.” Roosevelt said something similar in his first address to Congress: “No man or body of men preaching anarchistic doctrines should be allowed at large any more than if preaching the murder of some specified private individual. Anarchistic speeches, writings, and meetings are essentially seditious and treasonable.”

People have been fighting to stop the construction of a militarized police facility threatening one of Atlanta’s “four lungs.” Anarchist or otherwise, they have put their lives on the line. One of whom, Manuel “Tortuguita” Terán, was murdered by the police in an act of wanton police terror. This is the terror we’re most familiar with. This is the terror that has killed thousands of people in recent years. Among the many victims we both know and don’t know are people that were often maligned after their extrajudicial killings.

And what's certain is no anarchist group in the history of this country has ever lived up to the relentless killing with impunity that the police and state exercise daily. Old propaganda tells us anarchism is a major threat while the state grants legitimacy to its forces that kill relentlessly based on race. This is what we should be collectively putting on trial, not the people resisting such an arrangement.

### **October 8<sup>th</sup> - This 'Cop City' Protester Was Jailed, Lost Her Job, and Now Faces Terror Charges**

by Evy Kwong (VICE)

After more than 20 years away from her childhood home, 49-year-old Priscilla Grim flew back to Atlanta from Brooklyn, planning to work remotely with her laptop from the forest in protest of the new "Cop City" police facility that would be built on that land.

Instead, she lost her job, was put in jail for weeks in pretrial detention to witness some of the "hardest" things she's ever seen in her life, and now is facing the same RICO "mob boss" charges as Donald Trump, along with domestic terrorism.

"Either everyone's a terrorist or no one's a terrorist. They have completely obliterated, in my mind, the actual definition of what the word terrorism is," Grim told VICE News in an exclusive interview.

In the new sweeping indictment dropped by Georgia Attorney General, Chris Carr this month, 61 activists fighting against the state's plans to raze the forest next to one of Atlanta's Black-working class neighborhoods to build a brand new police facility including a mock city and a shooting range – dubbed "Cop City" – were hit with RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) charges.

The 109-page indictment goes on to accuse some of the activists, like Grim, with domestic terrorism, citing things like wearing black clothing, "handing out flyers," and using social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to share their "anti-authority" presence. The indictment also states instances of vandalism and "arson" by protesters.

Terms also used to build an argument against the activists in the indictment include "mutual aid," "protecting the environment at all costs", and "solidarity" as rhetoric and tools for anarchy and terrorism.

"I literally saw thousands of people die in front of me in real time as a building collapsed on my rooftop," Grim recalled of watching the attacks on 9/11 from her home in Brooklyn. "It's completely offensive to me that the state of Georgia is saying that someone who wears black is a terrorist. Wearing black is not akin to mass murder."

In March, the 49-year-old mother returned to Atlanta after learning about the detrimental impacts the development would have on both the forest, as well as people of color fearing police brutality and militarized training. This includes a 26-year-old Manuel "Tortuguita" Terán, who was killed while sitting in the forest in protest. While cops initially ruled that he had attacked police first, an autopsy commissioned by the family later found he was shot at least 57 times while sitting down with his hands up.

"I understood this to be at the intersection of Black Lives Matter, trampling freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and climate justice in order to uphold the violence of policing, which we're in a national crisis over," Grim said. "I understood the struggle to be led by Black and Indigenous people of Atlanta fighting environmental racism."

But after spending a few nights in the forest, she and dozens of others were arrested.

"All that I knew was that I was being chased. I was not told I was being arrested. I just all of a sudden heard this very heavy, what I thought were male bodies behind me, screaming at me to stop and [being] tackled to the ground. And I literally thought I was going to lose my life," Grim said.

From there, she and five other forest defenders were put in the same pod at the DeKalb County Jail for pretrial detention with a group of inmates who were booked for things like “driving without a license” or “being homeless,” Grim said. She had no idea how long she would be detained, and called her employer back home in New York City to explain but ended up losing her job and locked behind bars in what would be the most traumatic moment of her life.

“I really saw it as a cage community. We just had to figure out how best to support each other to get through the hardest thing in our lives, you know?”

In jail, Grim witnessed an inmate sitting in a “pool of period blood and feces” because they weren’t given enough sanitary napkins. She also witnessed jail staff bribing inmates with food—when they were being “starved” with food only arriving every 12 to 14 hours—to clean up a flood of contaminated water in the jail pod while only wearing socks and slides.

When inmates were able to afford to buy items from the commissary, many bought ramen but had to use shower water to heat it, as there was no fresh hot water on site. In a commissary bill that Grim still has, essentials like shampoo, creams, and warm thermals were also taxed.

One of the most haunting things Grim witnessed during her 31 days in jail was a fellow inmate who had attempted suicide by hanging herself with a bed sheet. “Everybody in the pod was freaking out, screaming ‘you need to help her.’ The guards laughed,” Grim said. “They finally got her out and took her away to medical. And the entire pod was yelled at for causing a problem.”

As the days dragged on, Grim decided she needed to document it as a way to survive the trauma, but also to remember the horrifying experiences so she’d be able to share it with others one day when she was free. But without resources, she resorted to writing on legal documents her lawyer shared with her during her time in jail, as well as plates from jail meals.

When Grim was finally released after a month she immediately flew back home, to her daughter and community in New York City who had helped pay her rent while she was locked away. Despite trying to get back to her “normal” life, she admits she hasn’t fully recovered.

“A streetlight could be in my eyes a certain way, and all of a sudden I’m back in my bed, in my cell, in my mind. It’s just because our lights were on all the time,” she said. Sometimes, when she’s having a trauma-related breakdown, she’ll try to calm herself down by calling that panicked inner voice “Jail Priscilla.”

“When ‘Jail Priscilla’ has a problem, she needs to be in the corner for a minute. I feel as though I have multiple realities at this moment and definitely life has affected me in ways that I am making different choices in life now,” she said.

Grim is now preparing for an even bigger fight for the upcoming trial over her RICO charges, which could result in 20 years in prison. Despite that, she says she’s survived so far, and is hoping that her speaking out sheds light on how the country is affected by the inhumane prison industrial complex.

“Angela Davis dealt with something way worse and she’s surviving and thriving now. The Black Panther Party was attacked with RICO. So were the Puerto Rican independendistas,” Grim said. “We now have the internet so people can actually see what the actual stakes are out to the public in protest. So, you know, I’m in good company.”

Grim added that it’s unsurprising that a country like the U.S. that totes free speech and the right to organize is now directly coming after protesters. In fact, it’s nothing new.

“We need to all remember that the United States has never been a democracy. This is a country that was founded on genocide. They talk about freedom to assemble and freedom of speech, they actually murdered

Indigenous people who were only living and trying to care for the land,” Grim said. “So, you know, the freedom of speech and gathering has only been protected for those in power, those who serve the interests of the white, wealthy classes.”

In fact, Grim says what’s happening now, in light of being accused of domestic terrorism, is actually what the state is putting on her and other land defenders like her.

“They're looking for ways to just put people in cages,” she said. “That's actually terrorism by the police state to us.”

### **October 9<sup>th</sup> - No Charges to be Filed in the Police Killing of Manuel Paez Terán**

*by Atlanta Community Press Collective*

Mountain District Attorney (DA) George R. Christian released a 31-page report on Friday and determined that no charges will be filed against the Georgia State Patrol (GSP) SWAT officers responsible for the January killing of environmental activist Manuel “Tortuguita” Paez Terán near the site of the proposed Atlanta Public Safety Training Center, more commonly known as Cop City.

Six GSP SWAT officers shot and killed Terán on Jan. 18 while participating in a multi-agency raid on encampments set up by activists attempting to stop the construction of Cop City. In a press conference hours after the shooting, then-Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI) head Mike Register — who left the GBI over the summer — said that Terán had fired on officers without warning, striking one, prompting the GSP officers to return fire and kill Terán. Activists immediately rejected the GBI narrative and called for an independent investigation, which did not happen. Footage from a body camera worn by an Atlanta Police Department officer nearby to the shooting also cast doubt on the GBI narrative as the officer wearing the body camera can be heard saying “you fucked your own officer up.”

According to a report by the DeKalb Medical examiner, Terán was shot dozens of times, receiving 57 gunshot wounds, including multiple wounds from the same bullets. An independent medical examiners report stated that Terán was likely killed in a cross-legged position with hands raised, palms facing inward. Neither the DeKalb nor independent medical examiners found evidence of gun-shot residue (GSR) on Terán’s hands. A GSR test kit report released by the GBI said analysts found GSR particles but acknowledged, “it is possible for victims of gunshot wounds, both self-inflicted and non-self-inflicted, to have GSR present on their hands.”

The GBI announced an investigation into the fatal shooting on Jan. 18, hours after the death of Terán. In April, once the GBI’s initial investigation was complete, those findings were passed on to Christian to determine whether to bring charges against the officers. Typically, the decision to bring charges rests with the DA for the area in which the shooting took place, but DeKalb County DA Sherry Boston recused herself from the case on the grounds of her office’s participation in the raid that led to the killing of Terán. The GBI also participated in the same raid, but the office did not recuse itself from the investigation.

Christian concurred with the GBI narrative of the shooting.

“The use of lethal (deadly) force by the Georgia State Patrol was objectively reasonable under the circumstances of this case,” wrote Christian in a press release about his decision. “No criminal charges will be brought against the Georgia State Patrol Troopers involved in the shooting of Manual Paez Teran.” Eds note: the spelling “Manual” instead of “Manuel” in the press release and report is the same as the quote reads.

Christian’s report on the investigation offers very little in the way of answers or clarity; instead, it relies heavily on the accounts of the GSP SWAT members themselves and the DeKalb medical examiner’s report that were all released publicly in March.

The report also revealed the existence of additional body camera footage from three Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Game Wardens who were assisting in the January raid and operating close by to the GSP SWAT team that killed Terán. According to the DA's report, like the APD body camera footage released in February, the DNR footage does not directly show the shooting, but "the audio portion of several individual body cameras recorded the sequence."

At least two of the DNR officers wearing body cameras are described as being at the site where Terán was killed prior to the shooting. Video from those body cameras would provide perhaps the best understanding of the scene, but the public is not likely to have access to them for years to come.

Christian wrote in a press release, "because there is a pending criminal investigation and prosecution by the State of Georgia, Attorney General's Office, including and related to the subject matter of this report...request made for records in this case will be denied, until such time as the above investigation and prosecution is not pending."

Christian also stated that the 31-page report will be the only information provided about the Jan. 18 shooting "due to the above pending matters."

The pending criminal investigation likely refers to the RICO case against the 61 protestors who were indicted in September, 42 of whom also have pending domestic terrorism cases being prosecuted by the Georgia Attorney General's office. Those cases are not expected to be resolved for several years. In the last major finished RICO case in Georgia – one in which 12 Atlanta Public School teachers were convicted in a test cheating scandal – the trial was not resolved for nearly four years. There are two other RICO cases being prosecuted in Fulton County currently, one against Donald Trump and other individuals accused of attempting to overturn the 2021 election, and a second against individuals alleged to be part of the Young Slime Life gang.

Until the racketeering and domestic terrorism cases against protestors are resolved, the public is left with only the scarce information that has already been released and the 31-page DA's report. On social media, Cop City opponents voiced disappointment, but a lack of surprise with the report's findings.

One of the main accounts used by Cop City opponents, the Defend the Atlanta Forest account on the X platform, responded to the report, saying, "justice doesn't come from the courts; it comes from our dedication to the fight for liberation through hardships. We honor our dead by refusing to give up."

Friday afternoon, the coalition responsible for a potential referendum vote to Stop Cop City also took to X and called into question the veracity of the DA's report.

"From the start," the coalition wrote, "the state's response to Tortugueta's murder has been to lie and cover up the facts. Today's announcement is just the latest in a long line of changing stories and withholding evidence."

As of the time of publication, attorneys for Terán's family have not released a statement regarding the report.

### **October 9<sup>th</sup> - A Note From Victor on Indigenous Peoples Day**

After being officially criminally indicted by the state of Georgia and reaching seven months of incarceration, I wish to speak again.

Today, on Indigenous People's Day, I want to raise my voice to remind everybody that this marks 531 years of Indigenous resistance here on Turtle Island. As Indigenous people, we must go beyond mere representation and celebrations. Police, prisons, reservations, detention centers, and borders operate through a shared logic of immobilization, containing our oppressed communities in their racial system.

I am right now in a place that shouldn't be holding any people, a place that should not exist. A place that has caused many cases of human rights abuses and violations, a place where many people have lost their lives. A place where people don't have proper shelter and healthcare. The people here are refugees. The prison industrial complex exists for profit; the goal of CoreCivic is to maximize profits, not to follow a moral compass by treating people with dignity. When you put corporations in charge of human beings, you will see flagrant violations of human rights, even to the point that people are dying. Everyone outside should raise their voice and demand that this stops.

In times of rising xenophobia and racism, we see images of thousands of migrants and refugees trying to cross the southern colonial border and we hear the rhetoric of border crisis. In reality, there is no border crisis but a displacement crisis. The war on migrant and refugee people does not exist separate from anti-Indigenous and anti-Black violence. Border imperialism is structurally bound up in genocide. Crees and Anishinaabe from Canada and Yaquis from Mexico crossed into the U.S.

in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and engaged in political struggles for recognition to challenge the state's subjugation of them as "foreign Indians" and "illegal immigrants."

Many southern immigrants/refugees are also Indigenous people and Black relatives. Borders and xenophobic immigration laws are rooted in Indigenous dispossession and anti-Black violence. In these 531 years of Indigenous resistance, I stand in solidarity with the relatives and Indigenous nations and communities remembering their old teachings, stories, songs, and remembering that we are all still warriors. Solidarity with migrant and refugee relatives at the southern colonial border, across the world, and behind bars in these detention centers/concentration camps. Solidarity with the land defenders fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline Black Snake and protecting life. Solidarity with Gaza — we are all owed dignity, personhood, respect.

As an Indigenous migrant man, I have been called many things by the state. Now more than ever, I continue resisting this ridiculous narrative and these new RICO charges. I'm a sundancer, a land defender, a frontliner, living in occupied Indigenous land and territories with obligations and responsibilities due to my presence here—I'm a warrior not by anyone else's definition other than my own and my people's. These are the identities I hold dear. Because some of these identities have been used as a weapon to oppress me, I use them as a weapon of my own liberation. I protect, nurture, and love in these deep ways.

I have been shot by rubber bullets many times; maced, tear-gassed, and pepper sprayed more times than I can remember; I have been bitten and attacked by dogs, I have had guns pointed at my face by white supremacists, sprayed by water cannons under freezing temperatures, tased a few times and injured many more. And I have always been proud to uphold my responsibilities and take a stand to defend people and land, even though standing up to the repressive power of the state has had a cost—the latest, this indictment, these seven months of incarceration and the so-real-now threat of deportation and removal from this land, this precious land. The land of my relatives, the land where my family lives, the land where my father is buried.

This is who I am. In this continuous detention, I'm fed up with the degradation and the conditions, but I want you all to know that I keep resisting and standing up against the daily conditions, against the dehumanization, and against this fucked up system that separates us. I live a life that I don't regret.

Homies and comrades, to all of you who I love: Resist with a depth beyond recognition. Now and forever, keep loving deep, nurturing freedom, valuing life, protecting the sacred, raising hell. We are unstoppable, we are an extension of Earth, we are spirit, we are power, and there can be no borders, restrictions, or jails for that. Until our paths cross and you see me again next to the moon puppy.

Solidarity with the people standing up against the police state and with the resistance to anti-Black racialized state violence. Freedom to stay, freedom to move and the right to return. From Stewart Detention Center, Unit 6B—close the camps, free us all!



## 5 Oct - A Trans Activist Is Now Charged With Assault After Defending Children from Neo-Nazis in a “Stand Your Ground” State

On a recent episode of the It's Going Down podcast, they spoke with Leif, a trans activist in Northern Ohio currently facing assault charges after defending children and their parents from violent neo-Nazis and Proud Boys in Wadsworth, Ohio in March of this year: [itsgoingdown.org/leif-interview-podcast](https://itsgoingdown.org/leif-interview-podcast)

### **MORE:**

From Leif's support campaign:

*In March of 2023 a family-friendly drag show in Wadsworth OH was threatened by anti-LGBT protesters including Proud Boys, Patriot Front, and Neo-Nazis. Show organizers asked for volunteers to help protect the show and its attendees. Leif was one of many people from Central Ohio who answered this call for volunteers. On the day of the show, attendees and supporters were outnumbered nearly 2-1 by anti-LGBT demonstrators from all over Ohio. While escorting families out of the event, Leif was assaulted by anti-LGBT protesters who hit him in the head with a megaphone. Police stood by and allowed this to happen. Leif feared for his life and the lives of the people he escorted – including children and a person with a service animal – and he took swift action to end the attack. FOR THIS JUSTIFIED ACT OF DEFENSE, HE IS BEING CHARGED WITH THREE COUNTS OF ASSAULT!*

*Do trans people have the same self-defense rights as everyone else? The law throughout the whole US allows a person to use force in defense of human life. Ohio is a 'stand your ground' state. This means a person has no "duty to retreat" and may use force in self-defense or defense of others, if they feel their life is in danger. The police and the state of Ohio have chosen to prosecute a trans man with criminal charges instead of the transphobes who assaulted him. We are going to fight back using any and all legal means necessary.*

Leif currently has a trial date on October 24<sup>th</sup> and needs support: [spot.fund/lwhhjsc](https://spot.fund/lwhhjsc)

## 6 Oct - 33 Lawmakers Urge Biden To Release Leonard Peltier!

*We must "hold our government accountable when we see a case of injustice," they said of the Indigenous activist who has been in prison for nearly 50 years.*

### **MORE:**

by Jennifer Bendery (*HuffPost*)

Nearly three dozen members of Congress on Friday urged President Joe Biden to grant clemency to Leonard Peltier, the now-ailing 79-year-old Native American rights activist who has been in prison for nearly 50 years.

"As Members of Congress, we sign this letter with a deep commitment to the crucial role we play in upholding justice for all Americans — and to also hold our government accountable when we see a case of injustice, as demonstrated by the long incarceration of Leonard Peltier," reads their letter to Biden, which was led by Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.).

"We applaud your commitment to criminal justice reform and your administration's work to address inequities in the criminal justice system and rectify the past wrongs of our government's treatment of Native Americans," they wrote. "We urge you to take the next step by granting Mr. Peltier executive clemency or compassionate release."

The letter is signed by 30 House members and three senators, Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) and Tina Smith (D-Minn.). It's the fourth time that Democrats in Congress have publicly appealed to Biden to release Peltier since he became president.

Interestingly, for the first time, a Republican congressman has added his voice to the calls for Peltier's release: Rep. Tim Burchett (R-Tenn.). His office did not respond to a request for comment on why he decided to join their efforts.

Peltier, a longtime Indigenous rights activist, has been in prison since 1977 and is easily America's longest-serving political prisoner.

Peltier was a leader of the American Indian Movement, or AIM, a grassroots group of activists focused on drawing attention to federal treaty rights violations, discrimination and police brutality targeting Native Americans.

The FBI and U.S. attorney's office scrambled to put him in prison when they couldn't figure out who killed two FBI agents during a 1975 shootout on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They never had evidence that he killed anyone, and his trial was outrageous: Prosecutors hid exculpatory evidence. The FBI threatened witnesses into lying. Peltier was separated from his co-defendants, all of whom were acquitted on the grounds of self-defense. A juror admitted she was racist against Native Americans on the second day of the trial but was allowed to stay on.

The U.S. government has since has acknowledged its egregious misconduct in the trial, with one federal judge concluding in 2003 that the government's behavior in the case "is to be condemned."

Nonetheless, Peltier was convicted of aiding and abetting whoever did kill the FBI agents on the grounds of simply being present that day, and sentenced to prison for two consecutive life terms. The prosecutors subsequently admitted they have no idea who shot the agents at point-blank range.

Peltier, who is now 79 years old, has maintained his innocence this entire time, which is certainly a factor in why he hasn't been paroled. His decades long parole process has been so problematic that United Nations legal experts last year made the unusual decision to revisit his case. Last summer, they called on Biden to release him immediately.

Peltier is currently deteriorating in a Florida maximum security prison, where he's almost always confined to a cell with inches of space to move within and in a near-constant state of lockdown. He uses a walker to get around. He is blind in one eye from a partial stroke. He has severe health concerns related to diabetes and an aortic aneurysm. It's bad.

The FBI continues to oppose his release, though, so that's why he's still there. The bureau's stated reason for why he should stay in prison, forever, is utter nonsense.

Biden could release Peltier at any time, unilaterally. It would mean going against the FBI's wishes. That's where the rub is. In the meantime, the president is facing increasing pressure from within his own party to let Peltier go home.

Beyond the repeated appeals from members of Congress, the Democratic National Committee last year unanimously passed a resolution calling on Biden to grant clemency to Peltier. Last month, hundreds of activists and Indigenous leaders held a rally outside the White House demanding Peltier's freedom. Amnesty International, the prominent human rights organization usually focused on freeing political prisoners in other countries, recently launched a new campaign aimed squarely at urging Biden to release Peltier.

Two prominent Indigenous leaders recently signaled that tribal leaders and Native rights advocates plan to make Peltier's freedom a priority issue in the 2024 presidential election.

"It's simply a choice we fully expect him to make," Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians, said of Biden releasing Peltier.

"Being silent on this issue, given all the facts, given all the advocacy, given all the issues raised by Indian Country — when it is your choice and you're the top person and you choose to ignore it, you've become complicit in this injustice for Indian Country," she said.

A White House spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

## 9 Oct - A Death in Dallas

*In 2016, a man named Tony Timpa called 911 for help in Dallas — and ended up dead. Initially, almost no one, including his family, knew what had happened to him.*

### **MORE:**

by Cary Aspinwall (*The Marshall Project*)

I had just moved to the city to work as an investigative reporter for *The Dallas Morning News*, when I got a tip from someone worried that his neighbor had died in connection with a drug rehab. All he told me was the guy's first name: Tony.

It wasn't a lot to go on. I spent weeks looking through records of deaths or medical emergencies in or near rehabs in north Texas. On a hunch, I searched the city's data for police incidents that month with the name "Tony." That was where I found the bare-bones report that said a 32-year-old complainant named Anthony Alan Timpa had "died by unknown means."

That meant three things: Timpa didn't die in a rehab, he had been the one who called for help, and that police had to file an "in-custody" death report with the Texas attorney general. I requested that document, and started asking for everything related to Timpa's death: The 911 call, police body camera footage, the full police report and his autopsy.

I was immediately stonewalled. Under Texas' open records law, the Dallas Police Department and the city's lawyers argued they could withhold the documents due to an "ongoing investigation."

Meanwhile, Timpa's mother, Vicki, was desperate to find out how her son had died. She hired a lawyer to file a civil rights lawsuit, initially naming the officers involved as John Does, because the city wouldn't even release that basic information. Timpa's father also joined the lawsuit against the officers and the city of Dallas.

My investigation into Timpa's death was published in 2017, based on what we could show from interviews, lawsuit filings and the scant records we had. Timpa had a mental health breakdown while on drugs, called police for help — and died while handcuffed and pinned to the ground in the prone position, with an officer's knee in his back.

The police refused to disclose nearly all the records about Timpa's death until the family and *The Dallas Morning News* sought them in court and a judge ordered their release in 2019. We finally got the body camera footage, which was released during my final week at *The Dallas Morning News*, just before I joined *The Marshall Project*.

It took even longer for the Timpa family to get their day in court. Their lawsuit was first slowed because of the police department's stonewalling, then the ongoing investigation (three officers were indicted on misdemeanor charges, which the district attorney later dropped). Then it was qualified immunity.

As my colleague Andrew Cohen has previously explained, "qualified immunity" is a legal doctrine that protects public officials from financial punishment for mistakes made while doing their jobs. Officials can act negligently — even recklessly — toward people in their care without legal or financial consequences. Critics say the doctrine has been construed so broadly that it often shields egregious and dangerous police actions.

Initially, a federal judge ruled that qualified immunity covered the officers involved in Timpa's death. But in 2021, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that ruling, saying the officers' training had taught

them that prolonged use of a prone restraint on someone in Timpa's state could result in "positional asphyxia death." An officer engages in "objectively unreasonable" application of force by continuing to kneel on the back of an individual who has been subdued, the justices wrote, sending the lawsuit back to Texas for a jury to examine.

This September — seven years after Timpa's death — a jury finally returned a verdict. After a week-long trial, jurors decided that three of the four police officers named in the lawsuit violated Timpa's constitutional rights. But jurors also said three of the four officers were protected by qualified immunity. They awarded \$1 million in compensatory damages to Timpa's now 15-year-old son — though nothing to Timpa's parents.

After the verdict, two jurors came forward at a press conference, saying the other jurors wanted to award the family nothing — mistakenly believing the officers would have to pay any damages out of their own pockets. That's not true. Dallas police are indemnified, a separate legal protection that means the city would pay.

Lawyers for the Timpa family have vowed that they're not giving up. They're planning to file a motion for a new civil trial seeking damages against the one officer who jurors decided was not protected by qualified immunity.

Lawyer Susan Hutchison, who represented Timpa's father, told *The Dallas Morning News*: "I will never understand a verdict where the jury found that the officers violated someone's constitutional rights and that resulted in their death — but that is OK? How on God's green earth is that OK? How is this not a green light for police to continue to violate constitutional rights?"

"If a jury won't stop them, who will?"

## **10 Oct - History of Political Prisoners Shows Enduring Power of Revolutionary Hope**

*Edited by abolitionist Josh Davidson and political prisoner Eric King, "Rattling the Cages" is an archive of defiance.*

### **MORE:**

by Zane McNeill (*Truthout*)

Political prisoners "are our messengers, our dreamers, and our pioneers," writes celebrated Marxist and abolitionist Angela Davis in the preface to *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners*. "They teach us that we do not have to accede to existing modes of organizing our collective existence. They remind us that there is life beyond racial capitalism, beyond heteropatriarchy, beyond the terrible web of carcerality, which they boldly critique even as it has captured their bodies. They are harbingers of the freedom to come."

*Rattling the Cages*, edited by abolitionist Josh Davidson and political prisoner Eric King, includes interviews with dozens of current and former political and anarchist prisoners. This collection explores why those interviewed were imprisoned and how they maintained their political convictions while incarcerated. The collection is published by AK Press, a worker-run, collectively managed anarchist publisher and distributor.

"The conversations that follow show resilience, determination, and an unswerving commitment to the struggles for which these freedom fighters continue to fight," Davidson writes in the preface. "Their principled resistance in the face of the unimaginably cruel and tortuous conditions they survive speaks volumes to their character."

Collectively these political prisoners, who include radicals and Black liberation militants from the '60s and '70s, current anti-fascists, nonviolent Catholic peace activists, Animal and Earth Liberation Front saboteurs, and more, have spent hundreds of years behind bars.

“I want to really capture what their prison experience was like, what they really feel about support, so the next generation (god willing there will be a next generation) will know what their mothers and fathers went through,” wrote Eric King, who helped to lead these interviews from his prison cell. “We cannot let those experiences go to waste. We cannot turn our backs on these people with apathy or indifference. We need to love them the way they loved the world enough to fight for it.”

King himself has been confined in egregious conditions at some of the most brutal federal prisons across the country after attempting to throw two Molotov cocktails at an empty federal building at nighttime to support the Ferguson uprising in Kansas City, Missouri, in 2014. While incarcerated, he has been the victim of assaults by prison guards and white supremacists, held in solitary confinement for several years, and had his access to mail and phone calls interrupted and withheld.

Despite the hardships he faced while incarcerated because of his political convictions, King has remained a dedicated anti-fascist, anarchist, anti-racist and vegan. His release date from federal prison is February 2024. Royalties from book sales will be split between King’s family and the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) Federation’s Warchest program, which provides financial support to currently imprisoned political prisoners.

The interviews in this collection show not only “the inhumanity of the carceral system and the depravity that the state embraces to maintain power,” in the words of Davidson, but also “that no level of carceral torture can kill the revolutionary hope for a better world.”

For a full interview with Josh, visit [tiny.cc/RattlingInterview](http://tiny.cc/RattlingInterview)

### **13 Oct - “Yinezza” by Marius Mason**

*New poetry from Marius!!!*

#### **MORE:**

Yinezza remembers  
Too much, so much  
All the bad things--  
She says that you have to keep  
A knife...  
Handy for ANYTIME  
Because they don't  
Understand  
The girl...just  
Trying to live  
In this MAN world.  
She rocks herself  
Sometimes (all the time)  
To hold on, arms  
Wrapped around  
Herself  
Just so \_Someone\_  
Will feel  
She's real...

### **22 Oct - Bstox Frightfully Fun Rent Party!**

**WHAT:** Rent Party

**WHEN:** 5:00pm, Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>

**WHERE:** Bluestockings Cooperative, 116 Suffolk Street, Manhattan

**COST:** Tickets are \$10-20 in advance online and \$20-30 at the door.

**MORE:**

Bluestockings Cooperative Bookstore is hosting our second RENT PARTY FUNDRAISER in our monthly series of community-run and -organized partying! Come join our freak fest and celebrate community with your favorite gays!

Like many small businesses, Bluestockings has fallen on hard financial times. With our monthly rent parties, we will be PAYING OUR RENT!

...but that's not all - our RENT PARTY is going to independently fundraise for multiple small businesses all at once. Come support us and our amazing vendors fundraise to keep the lights on with tattoo artists, piercers, tarot readers, sex workers & the Halloween madness of the most beautiful community of small business owners. Buy a ticket for yourself or donate a ticket. Either way, put your masks & fishnets on and put your money where your mouth is! Masks are required for all and ID is required to partake in beer & wine.

**29 Oct - A Green Scare(y) Halloween Card-Writing**

**WHAT:** Political Prisoner Letter-Writing

**WHEN:** Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Woodbine (585 Woodward Avenue, Queens)

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

'Tis the season once again for ghouls and ghosts and goblins and...our annual Green Scare(Y) letter writing to earth and animal liberation prisoners. Given the sheer number of folks facing RICO charges related to the defense of the Weelaunee Forest in Atlanta and especially given that Victor Puertas is still jailed, NYC ABC is adding to the list of folks facing repression for earth and animal liberation, often referred to as the Green Scare.

What scares capitalists and their government lackeys more than even the threat of human extinction is the audacity of some to resist this global ecocide. So much so that they conspired to label actions in which no one was physically harmed as "eco-terrorism"- with harshly exaggerated sentences to match- and even cooperated with a supposedly anti-imperialist "communist dictatorship" to rob one defendant of their freedom. This "Green Scare" is not just recent history, it is the very real present for folks currently in prison serving egregiously long sentences or awaiting trial for actions taken on behalf of the earth and its inhabitants (both human and non-human).