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Updates for October 3rd

18 Sept - Judge Dismisses Water Protectors' Charges In The Interests Of Justice

In a historic ruling, a Minnesota judge dismissed all charges against three Native water protectors in the interests of justice.

MORE:

by Climate Defense Project (*Popular Resistance*)

As three Native women Water Protectors prepared for trial next week in Aitkin County, Judge Leslie Metzen dismissed all remaining criminal charges against Winona LaDuke, Tania Aubid and Dawn Goodwin late Thursday afternoon, September 14, 2023. The nearly three-year-old charges stemmed from a peaceful and prayerful gathering on the banks of the Mississippi River on ceded Anishinaabe land as Enbridge began construction of its Line 3 tar sands pipeline. Joined by several dozen other Water Protectors, the three women wore ceremonial jingle dresses, and sang, danced, and prayed for the water as heavy construction equipment tore into the earth. Law enforcement later targeted LaDuke, Aubid, and Goodwin through social media surveillance and charged them with a slew of misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses.

In a landmark opinion, Judge Metzen powerfully set forth her reasons for exercising her discretion to dismiss all remaining charges in the interests of justice — stating in no uncertain words, "to criminalize their behavior would be the crime."

In celebration of this historic ruling, LaDuke, Aubid, and Goodwin will hold a press conference along with their attorneys at 10:00 A.M. C.S.T. on Monday, September 18, 2023, via Zoom. Selected language from Judge Metzen's opinion follows, and copies of her order and memorandum are attached.

The defendants were acting in accordance with centuries of practice and tradition in seeking to protect the water on their Indigenous land. At the final pretrial hearing on September 13, 2023, Goodwin's defense attorney Joshua Preston implored the Court to exercise its discretion and act as a check against prosecutorial abuses that have criminalized Indigenous peoples for seeking to protect their homelands. Preston compared the disparate treatment between the defendants and Enbridge, which received a single criminal charge and a negotiated dismissal announced the same day as the charge itself. Preston connected the preferential treatment of extractive industry, despite ongoing harms, to a legacy of violent colonization.

Attorneys Claire Glenn, Frank Bibeau, and Jordan Kushner adopted Mr. Preston's arguments on behalf of LaDuke and Aubid as well. In her ruling, the judge cited the binding but often broken treaties between the United States and the Anishinaabeg people that have been signed regarding land cession:

"This Court finds that it is within the furtherance of justice to protect the defendants peacefully protesting to protect the land and water on the land addressed in these treaties by dismissing this action against all defendants."

20 Sept - Why is Georgia prosecuting leftwing activists with the same law as Trump?

Using anti-racketeering laws created to fight the mafia, the state is cracking down on people protesting a police training facility

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by Akin Olla (*The Guardian*)

Within weeks of each other, Donald Trump and 61 leftwing activists were indicted under criminal conspiracy laws in Georgia. What may feel like a victory for centrism and justice is actually a dangerous conflation.

The protesters are part of the Stop Cop City movement, fighting to prevent the construction of a new police urban combat training facility over what the Muscogee Creek people call the Weelaunee forest outside of Atlanta. One protester has already been killed by police, with an independent autopsy detailing that they probably had their hands up when they were shot 57 times.

Georgia has expansive anti-racketeering laws, originally created to fight the mafia; the state's Republican attorney general, Chris Carr, has decided to stretch these laws far past what could reasonably be considered their intended purpose. While the former president was indicted for an alleged conspiracy to literally overthrow the government, many Stop Cop City protesters are facing similar charges for such acts as receiving reimbursements for glue and food and raising money to bail others out of jail.

The indictments against the protesters are a naked attempt to destroy a grassroots social movement. Worse, they create a precedent that will allow both Republicans and Democrats to further their separate tracks of crushing any public opposition to government policy.

Cop City was first planned in 2017 but only gained steam following the 2020 Black liberation protests. Instead of addressing the myriad of issues that Atlanta residents face, the city backed the giant police and fire training facility, which was proposed by a rightwing police foundation funded by corporations like Home Depot and Wells Fargo. A large network of organizers and activists, from faith and environmental groups to socialist parties and anarchist collectives, got together to protect the forest. They used a range of tactics, from occupying the land to knocking on the doors of neighbors to inform them about the construction.

It was the occupations of the forest and disruption of construction, traditional tactics of environmentalists, that triggered a police raid that led to officers shooting 26-year-old Manuel "Tortuguita" Terán. Police claimed Tortuguita shot first, wounding police officers, but one autopsy denies that Tortuguita could have been holding a gun and an officer was recorded on video during the incident saying: "You fucked your own officer up," implying that the police may have been in a friendly-fire incident.

Following Tortuguita's death, organizers mobilized hundreds of people to city hall to speak in a record-breaking 14 hours of public comment, but the Atlanta city council ignored the anti-Cop City groundswell and went on to approve \$67m of public money for the project.

A coalition within the movement switched strategies and moved to put the construction to a referendum; thus far the coalition has submitted petitions signed by over 100,000 Atlanta residents – a gobsmacking fifth of the entire city. In response, the city has prepared a series of roadblocks to ensure that no resident will have a say in this process, a move that some residents are calling voter suppression.

The indicted Stop Cop City protesters are being charged under Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (Rico) act, an extension of a federal law created under Richard Nixon to crush the Italian American mafia. For those unfamiliar with The Sopranos and the trials and tribulations of the mob, Rico statutes target the unique structure of the mafia, a hyper-centralized organization with an insulated leadership that can't be caught up in street-level crimes. The laws allow for different crimes to be linked together and used to prosecute an entire organization at the same time, with increased charges for everyone involved. These increased charges also make it easier to coerce lower-level mobsters to snitch on their higher-ups.

While Trump's alleged conspiracy – a centralized operation with vague attempts to obscure the leadership – fits the bill, the Stop Cop City movement is the opposite. It is neither centralized nor a criminal organization. While some activists have engaged in acts of sabotage to protect the forest, it is absurd to consider their activities as constituting a criminal organization, unless you consider all protest movements illegal. But these indictments basically do just that – tying together acts like passing out flyers, providing legal support and literally writing the letters "ACAB" into an amorphous nonsensical conspiracy.

This, of course, has been the unfortunate trajectory of such indictments and anti-protest laws since the mass protests following George Floyd's murder in 2020. Because Georgia prosecutors can't name a clear command structure like one might do with the mob, the indictment of the Stop Cop City activists is focused on the alleged anarchist ideology of the protesters and their desire to create a better world.

The indictment lists things like "mutual aid", essentially inter-communal charity, as if they are acts of terrorism or equivalent to shaking down store owners for protection. In the words of Anthony Michael Kreis, a constitutional law expert interviewed by the *New York Times*, the document "seems like an indictment of an ideological disposition".

It is hardly surprising when rightwing forces use the law to shut down progressive protest; what is unsettling here is the complicity of supposedly liberal Democrats. Unfortunately, the Stop Cop City indictments fit neatly with the increasingly reactionary and anti-democratic behavior of Democratic politicians in Atlanta and elsewhere. (Recall Joe Biden's past comments about "antifa" and his desire to increase funding for police.)

There is a growing conspiracy to use violence and coercion to take over the country, but the instigators are figures of the right like Trump and Ron DeSantis and organizations like the Proud Boys. As prices and temperatures rise, leftwing movements will be necessary for our collective survival. Framing progressive activists as equivalent to gangsters and rightwing insurrectionists is a dangerous path that will birth a system even worse than our already cracking capitalism.

21 Sept - Running Down the Walls 2023: A Reportback from NYC

Reportback on Running Down the Walls event from New York City Anarchist Black Cross (ABC).

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Running Down the Walls 2023 has come and gone. Here in NYC, we had a beautiful day to do it, the mid-September New York weather finally feeling like autumn instead of a desert summer. Both Prospect Park and the City itself seemed even busier than usual, with buskers, vendors and birthday parties nearby and marches and rallies elsewhere in town. In coordinating a multi-city run with organizers on both sides of the walls, we have to find a day that works for everyone involved as much as possible. As it turned out not only did Sunday, September 17 this year land during Rosh Hashanah, but both the Climate March and the 54th Annual African Day Parade were on Sunday as well. It also happened to be the 2nd day of the NYC Anarchist Book Fair, which we spent all day Saturday tabling at. So it was a busy weekend for many New Yorkers, including NYC ABC! Even still, a lively core of runners, bikers, walkers, and chillers assembled near the black RDTW banner to raise funds, awareness, and community solidarity for our political prisoners. It was wonderful to reconnect with longtime friends and comrades, and to welcome some new faces!

The goal of RDTW, this year as much as any, is of course to raise much-needed funds for the Anarchist Black Cross Federation Warchest Program. Also though, and always, any chance to share information about the political prisoners and POW's we support is heartily welcomed. Not to mention that events such as these are important in building and maintaining communities of solidarity in the here and now, rather than waiting for some dreamy future or idealizing pasts or present communities of which we are not a part.

The namesake event itself kicked off a bit later than usual this year, as 'anarchy time' remains as reliable as ever. This year there were some pretty serious runners and bikers, as well as some casual perambulators happy to enjoy the fresh air at an unhurried pace. After the 'run', as is local anarchist tradition, organizers, participants and supporters shared an especially delicious home-cooked vegan meal, and spent a few more hours making new friends and catching up with cherished comrades.

We'll leave you here with a few Running Down the Walls 2023 solidarity statements from some former political prisoners, as well as from a couple of good folks still behind the walls. Hopefully we'll see you all at next year's Running Down the Walls! Free Them All!

21 Sept - Toby Shone Recalled To Prison

Toby Shone is an anarchist who was imprisoned in Wandsworth, Bristol and G4S Prison Parc for nearly two years accused of being the administrator of counter-information project 325.nostate.net.

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After the political prosecution failed and the cops had to drop the case 5 days before trial in October 2021, Toby received a sentence of 3 years 9 months for possession of psychedelic medicines. He was released on 28 December 2022 under heavy restrictions (license conditions), oversight by a multi-agency team (MAPPA) including the National Security Division (counter-terror) and forced to live in a filthy bail hostel in Gloucester for 9 months. He had just moved back into a flat in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire 9 days ago.

On the morning of 19 September 2023, he was driving to an appointment with his probation officer when he was pulled over and arrested by an armed police unit in-between the Forest of Dean and Gloucester. He was taken to HMP Bristol. He is awaiting more detailed information, but his legal team say that the allegations are that he breached two of his license conditions: being in possession of an [unauthorised] phone and attending a meeting in Bristol in August. Toby is in great spirits as ever and requests letters and books.

21 Sept - What living through COVID in jail taught me about abolition

"How the shared experience of quarantine created new lessons in empathy" writes former anti-racist political prisoner David Campbell.

MORE:

by David Campbell (*Scalawag*)

I remember speaking with a friend on the phone during the tumultuous early days of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. She was waiting in a block-long line of masked, panicked shoppers at a Wegmans near the Brooklyn Navy Yard, hoping to procure some toilet paper. I was five months into a 12-month sentence on Rikers Island. The entire nation of Italy had just gone into lockdown, she told me, citing an article that described the country as a "beautiful prison."

She hurriedly added that this was, of course, absurd. Being stuck at home, she said, was nothing like prison. It was clear to me that she was saying this for my benefit. I rank pretty highly on just about any privilege scale you could come up with; people don't usually go out of their way to make sure they're not offending me with what they say, so it stands out when they do.

"The comparisons of self-quarantine to incarceration are countless," I wrote in my jail journal on March 31, 2020, noting that only days earlier, the *New York Times* food section had published a number of recipes designed to "make sheltering feel less like a sentence."

Of course, quarantining and being imprisoned are not the same. People outside were dealing with long lines at the grocery store, while those of us behind bars had to go on strike just to get hand soap and cleaning products. More importantly, our demands also included the release of high risk prisoners as well as those with short sentences for nonviolent offenses, echoing a statement produced only days earlier by the Board of Correction. We actually won and in less than 24 hours, nearly all of the men in my dormitory were released. They simply walked out the door.

Our strike contributed to the release of 30 percent of the island's total incarcerated population, including over 75 percent of sentenced prisoners like myself. Three months later, only 13 percent had been rearrested,

most for minor offenses. If we lived in a society that actually invested in things like healthcare, housing, employment, and feeding the hungry, rather than policing and prisons, that number would no doubt be even lower.

This is the first lesson I learned from surviving the first wave of COVID-19 in jail, that a significant proportion of those behind bars could be released immediately and things would be just fine. Between the lockdowns and the uprisings following George Floyd's murder, making sense of 2020's national crime rates is notoriously difficult. However, it is clear that no city saw a spike in crime due to people being released from incarceration.

Perhaps arguing for the release of 30-75 percent of incarcerated people feels like a low bar, or even a betrayal to the principle of freeing them all. But if "free them all" is good enough for me as a rhetorical device, "free a lot of them right now" is good enough for me as a practical starting point—even if it makes for a less catchy hashtag.

The crux of this lesson is in its immediacy. I am as loath as the next abolitionist to split those behind bars into groups of those who "deserve" to be released and those who do not, and I know all too well what it feels like to be left behind. I and a handful of others were forced to stay and serve out the remainder of our sentences. Yet, I also recall the joy I felt when I realized that my friends were going home. A huge number of incarcerated people could be allowed to go home, right now, and there would not be chaos in the streets. On the contrary, we would all be better off for it.

The second lesson I learned is perhaps more controversial, and it has to do with the comparison between quarantine and prison that my friend made on the phone—a comparison I just couldn't shake. "Quarantine resembles incarceration" seems like the sort of thing you're not supposed to say, because it opens up a window for self important people to rail about how their confinement was "like being in jail" à la Ellen DeGeneres.

But for every first wave article decrying claims of similarity, there was another attesting to formerly incarcerated people relying on their time behind bars to make it through quarantine. I used to offer advice to my friends quarantined at home about the routines I had developed to help me pass the time in jail.

I was released in October 2020, and dealt with smaller, rolling lockdowns over the next six months or so, during which time I drew heavily upon the same skill set. They call it lockdown for a reason, after all.

The comparison also abounds in literature and philosophy. In *Discipline and Punish*, for example, Michel Foucault describes "the plague-stricken town" as a sort of precursor to the infamous panopticon. Albert Camus' novel *The Plague* includes numerous descriptions of those in quarantine as being in prison, including terms like "prisoners of the plague" and "prison-house[s]."

The quote Camus chose for the book's epigraph speaks volumes in its own right: "It is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not." The reason this substitution works is because our brain makes the connection subconsciously, or involuntarily.

The fact that different forms of confinement can resemble each other, at least in how they feel to those actually living through them, is undeniable. But it's what you do with that information that matters. For example, to curb my anxiety while I prepared for my incarceration, I frequently reminded myself that people returning from time cooped up in remote research stations often report the same sort of overwhelmedness and disorientation as those recently released from jail or prison—and the same sort of loneliness, desperation, and creativity while living through them.

Of course, similarity is not identity. "These motherfuckers complaining about being stuck in the house," a fellow prisoner scoffed during the first wave, sucking his teeth. "I'm thirsty to be in the house." I, too,

would gladly have changed places with any of my friends or family in quarantine. But it's not about him, or me. It's about dismantling the prison system.

Ellen made it about herself, but I truly believe that the experience of quarantine among the general public presents a unique opportunity for broadening the abolition movement's personal appeal because it invites an empathic connection. For the first time in living memory, any given abolitionist can assume any given passerby has lived through something vaguely resembling incarceration.

If we're not afraid to talk about these similarities, we can invite those who went through the experience of quarantine to remember that time and multiply it by a thousand, a million—and extend it by months, years, or decades.

In late May 2020, I was listening to the radio at the day room's steel table when I caught an interview on WNYC with the Fortune Society's JoAnne Page. She said she hoped "people's experience during the pandemic, when they see how hard it is to be locked into their homes, will make them a little more sensitive to what it means to lock people [up] for years."

This was my hope, too. It still is. Yet, I also fear that most people's conception of return to "normal," whatever that may mean, necessarily includes forgetting the pandemic and any lessons it—or the unique social experiment of mass release—may have offered.

22 Sept - Pipeline Fighter Denied Bail After Blocking MVP Construction For 3 Days

Report on recent action against the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) that blocked construction for three days.

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Early Saturday morning, a pipeline fighter using the name “Bramble” locked herself to a buried lockbox at a Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) worksite in Roanoke County. She prevented pipeline workers from clearing vegetation on the top of Poor Mountain for three days; on Monday, she was extracted from her blockade and arrested. As of Tuesday afternoon, she is still being held without bail.

“I’m fighting for a world where we can all be free,” Bramble stated. On day 2 of her blockade, she wrote, “Workers came by my spot today and took away my supplies, hoping that I would leave. In the end though, they can’t take away the view I have from up here. I can see so much of what we are up against.

“I can see the pipeline easement for miles, their machines that destroy the forest, and Western Virginia Regional jail where Wren and Acre were held for months after they were extracted from the Yellow Finch treesits, along with so many others who are unjustly incarcerated. The mountains and wild forest surrounding all that evil is so much bigger, and it’s untamed.”

Banners at the site throughout the blockade read, “No Prisons, No Pipelines,” and “No Patriarchy, No Pipelines.”

On Saturday and Monday, additional folks gathered nearby to show their support for Bramble.

People have been disrupting MVP construction regularly since construction restarted on July 5th 2023, with many stoppages occurring at the sites where MVP still plans to cross difficult, dangerous terrain. At least two dozen work stoppages have occurred since work restarted, including walk-ons, rallies and multiple other lockdown protests. Poor Mountain, where this action is happening, is where the Yellow Finch Treesits blocked the MVP’s path for two and a half years from 2018-2021. It is one of the steepest stretches of the MVP easement, and one of the last remaining areas of the pipeline’s path where downed trees have not been cleared.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a 42-inch diameter fracked gas pipeline slated to cross 300 miles of Appalachia. In June 2023, congress passed a law to fast track the MVP, despite the pipeline's long history of environmental violations and failure to hold on to key permits. People have been resisting the MVP since it was initially proposed and continue to fight this toxic project.

23 Sept - Eric King Update

Mail is so difficult to predict and letters take a lot longer to clear the special investigation services mailbox than articles.

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When he gets a stack of mail it could be from last week or from 2 months ago it's difficult to tell. Eric has been getting some amazing letters and he wants to answer them all but in the last few months his health problems that have developed over years of medical neglect and 5 years spend in isolation cells have left him so much pain writing letters is excruciating. He wanted to let folks know that he's probably going to be unable to write in the next couple months leading up to hopefully at some point a halfway house placement. We know everyone is desperate and waiting for news, we assure you we are as well. That August estimate didn't really age well did it 🤖?

He sends his love thanks and support. He's nervous and excited about re-entering the world after 10 years of development he missed out on. He's super giddy about the December release of this project that they have worked so hard on. He is invigorated about entering right back into that system that he was so desperate to leave and becoming a paralegal and pursuing the field of law when he is free. 🙄 Those former guards and "expert" witnesses around the adx need a little job competition as well 😊.

27 Sept - Abolish Grand Juries

Whether they're targeting Donald Trump or Cop City protesters, grand juries are an irredeemable and unaccountable tool of state prosecutorial power.

MORE:

by Chava Shapiro and James Clark (*The Nation*)

On August 29, a grand jury in Fulton County, Ga., issued an indictment against 61 alleged participants in the movement to defend Atlanta's Weelaunee Forest and stop the building of the police training facility now known around the world as Cop City. The indictment charges them under Georgia's RICO law with a broad "racketeering conspiracy" to prevent the destruction of the forest.

Barely two weeks earlier, according to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Greg Bluestein, the exact same grand jury issued a much more high-profile RICO indictment against former president Donald Trump and his associates for their attempts to overturn the 2020 election.

There is much that can be said about the same grand jury issuing these two indictments targeting disparate political tendencies. Some might be tempted to see it as an example of equal justice meted out by an impartial legal system. Some might also be tempted to cheer at the use of the grand jury to prosecute Trump. But what the indictments really show is that the grand jury process in the modern US criminal legal system is bankrupt, and that grand juries should be abolished.

A grand jury is a legal proceeding intended to determine whether there is a minimum amount of evidence necessary to charge someone with a crime, and then issue formal charges called indictments. In the federal system and 23 states, grand jury indictments are required in at least some felony cases. 25 states make grand jury indictments optional, and two states, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, have abolished indicting grand juries altogether (but retain provisions for investigative grand juries).

The grand jury process is blunt and straightforward. A prosecutor presents evidence and witnesses to the grand jurors and requests that they approve a criminal indictment. There is no judge or defense attorney in

the courtroom, and the proceedings are secret, leaving the prosecutor as the sole arbiter of the information presented.

Usually, the law enforcement agents who investigated the case are the only witnesses called before a grand jury, but other civilian witnesses can be compelled to appear and testify as well. There is a long history of governments using the secretive nature of grand jury proceedings and their power to compel testimony under penalty of contempt as a tool to harass, intimidate, and repress social and political movements, including the Black Panther Party, Puerto Rican Independenistas, Indigenous rights activists, anarchists, and anti-war activists.

Grand juries admittedly have a noble origin story. In theory, they give a body of disinterested citizens who review cases power to ensure there is sufficient evidence before the government can charge someone with a crime. That's why the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution guarantees you the right to have your case presented to a grand jury, alongside your right to remain silent and your right to due process.

But the truth is that grand juries seldom—if ever—serve as a check on state prosecutorial power. Instead, they serve primarily to conceal and legitimize that power.

Grand juries were once common around the world. But in 2023, just two countries—the United States and Liberia—maintain the grand jury system. A string of other countries, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, have all abolished their previous grand jury systems. And once you begin to really examine how grand juries operate, you can understand why.

The list of reasons grand juries violate the basic principles of impartial justice is very long. But here are just a few.

Prosecutors exercise almost absolute control over the grand jury process. Former chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals Sol Wachtler is famous for noting that prosecutors have so much influence on grand juries that they could get them to “indict a ham sandwich.”

Prosecutors decide what evidence to present and how to present it. They have no obligation to present the other side of the story, or opposing legal theories. In one notable exception, though, Georgia law gives police officers the right to testify in their defense to a grand jury investigating them for crimes committed in the course of duty.

There are no constraints on what types of evidence the prosecutor can present. Illegally obtained evidence, unqualified or unreliable opinions, hearsay, speculation, rumor, and conjecture are all fair game.

There is no judicial oversight, and no one is present to test or question the evidence from the prosecutor. No defense attorneys are there to cross-examine any witnesses.

Your right against double jeopardy does not apply to grand jury proceedings. If a particular grand jury refuses to issue an indictment, nothing stops a motivated prosecutor from presenting the same case and evidence to a subsequent grand jury for a second—or third, or fourth—bite at the apple.

Because potential grand jurors are randomly selected from voter registrations and because certain criminal histories bar participation, grand juries often have a disproportionately whiter and more affluent composition. Additionally, grand jurors are not screened for bias or prejudice the way trial jurors are.

Unlike trial juries, a grand jury's decision does not need to be unanimous, so “lone holdouts” have no impact. Moreover, grand juries are highly susceptible to groupthink because their work is so insulated from the outside; they meet regularly over an extended period (often six months or more); and they are led by prosecutors with an explicit agenda.

Grand juries operate under an enormous shroud of secrecy. Participants who divulge the activities of a grand jury can face criminal penalties. Originally meant to protect the reputations of those that a grand jury chooses not to indict, grand jury secrecy primarily serves to hide a major instrument of state power from public scrutiny or accountability.

While prosecutors mostly use grand juries to charge people with crimes, they can also use grand juries to shield themselves from public backlash when they make unpopular decisions not to bring charges. For example, when communities are righteously outraged over a police murder of an unarmed person like Mike Brown, Eric Garner, or Breonna Taylor, prosecutors will put the case to a grand jury to decide if the cop gets charged, never acknowledging the unfettered power they have over the grand jury's decision. When the grand jury doesn't return an indictment, the prosecutors pretend it was out of their hands. We are brutally reminded time and again that killer cops simply are not ham sandwiches.

Ultimately, grand juries serve as a rubber stamp of the prosecutor's desired outcome. They do not protect people at the margins from prosecutorial overreach but rather serve as a prosecutorial tool to enforce the dominant societal norms and power structures on the marginalized.

Without grand juries, would we simply resign ourselves to the unchecked power of prosecutors to bring whatever charges they want against whomever they want? Assuming for a moment that that is not already what happens, there are other ways to screen for weak, unprovable, or inappropriate criminal charges early in the process—something that nearly every other country in the world has proven, since, again, only the US and Liberia still use grand juries.

The most common screening procedure is the preliminary hearing. In preliminary hearings, the prosecution presents evidence in open court, the defense has an opportunity to challenge the prosecution's evidence or present their own, and a judge determines whether probable cause exists for the case to move forward.

This procedure, while imperfect in its own ways, has the advantage of being open and transparent, making clear exactly who is making charging decisions and who is determining whether probable cause exists. It also gives the defense fair notice of the allegations and an opportunity to be heard before they are made to stand trial for serious charges.

In Fulton County, we see a stark example of prosecutorial control of grand juries: Two different prosecutors with distinct but overlapping political objectives are both wielding the same grand jury as their tool. On the one hand, a local Democrat district attorney used the grand jury to stymie an autocratic former president. On the other, a state Republican attorney general used the exact same grand jury to try to crush a popular movement to save a cherished community resource.

While we might feel inclined to gloat because Trump is being prosecuted under RICO, we can simultaneously acknowledge that legitimizing the use of grand juries bolsters a tool that is fraught with prosecutorial manipulation and abuse.

Prosecutors in Georgia are innovating novel and frightening uses of both the grand jury proceeding and the RICO statute that will be used against friend at least as often as foe. We've seen this already in the repression against the movement to defend the Weelaunee Forest when alleged participants were charged with a state domestic terrorism law that was enacted in response to white supremacist mass murders. Now, overbroad and extremely punitive RICO laws meant to target organized crime (a frightening expansion of state power and mass incarceration at their inception) are being weaponized against explicitly political formations, and diffuse social movements are being labeled "racketeering enterprises."

And the dual-purpose vehicle the prosecution is using for all of it is the grand jury—the spear to issue the criminal indictments, and the shield to protect the state from the backlash.

Whether it's Trump or forest defenders in the crosshairs, grand juries are an irredeemable and unaccountable tool of state prosecutorial power, not citizen power. Whatever decent origins grand juries may have were outgrown long ago and their enduring presence in our legal system is deeply regressive. We should put the grand jury to rest once and for all.

28 Sept - Inside the High-Security "Black Site" Where Leonard Peltier Is

Unbeknownst to most protesters who gathered at the White House on the occasion of Native American political prisoner Leonard Peltier's 79th birthday, Peltier wasn't able to celebrate, much less receive reports on how the well-attended event was progressing.

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by Silja J.A. Talvi (*Truthout*)

That's because Peltier, who is now spending his 48th year in captivity, was sitting on his bunk, across from his cellie, "locked down" in a cramped and concrete maximum-security cell designed for one man.

The Bureau of Prison's "lockdown" phenomenon has spread to other federal facilities, but nowhere is as pronounced and as repressive as at USP Coleman I, part of the nation's biggest federal prison complex, FCC Coleman, which consists of four prisons of various security levels. (Female prisoners were transferred out of the camp in 2021 after it was revealed that corrections officers had raped innumerable women.)

FCC Coleman functions like a military complex, complete with cellphone dampening technology, audio and visual surveillance, heavily armed guards and gunfire "practice" sessions, which have left surrounding neighborhood residents concerned about why, precisely, guards are practicing with live fire.

The BOP has admitted to the live fire training sessions at USP Coleman I, which was held during the longest single period of the lockdown: five weeks from July 9 to August 14, 2023. During this time period, the people incarcerated there were initially told that they were not being punished, and that the measures were temporary. Those reassurances were the last of their kind, and incarcerated people no longer receive any explanation or justification for their plight.

Family and friends, who have often been unable to reach their loved ones, have received no explanation for the constant lockdowns, which began on the heels of what should have been a return to regular operations after roughly three years of "restricted housing" and "modified operations" related to the COVID-19 epidemic. During this time, the people incarcerated at USP Coleman I had no physical visitation with approved visitors, although they were able to access phones and email.

Attorneys who have inquired after their clients have had many visits canceled throughout 2023. In addition, Peltier's lead attorney, Jenipher Jones, Esq., said her legal mail to another client is often returned with no explanation attached. BOP protocol is that when mail is returned, there is an explanation given for how the mail violated prison rules. To make matters worse, her client's postal mail often never reaches her.

Within the BOP, all regular postal mail has long been subject to a process by which staff open envelopes, read the contents and scan copies of the letters before giving those low-resolution copies to prisoners. Legal mail is supposed to be an exception, but people imprisoned in several BOP facilities say legal mail has been surveilled in new ways as a standard practice since the COVID pandemic began: At FCI Tallahassee, a federal women's prison in Florida, even legal mail is now opened by staff, but not in front of prisoners as it should be if contraband is suspected. (Other BOP prisoners especially on the West Coast say that legal mail continues to be handled as it should be: Staff are not allowed to read the content of legal mail. But if it's decided that there's a suspicion of contraband being sent in, then the legal mail is opened in front of the prisoner to check for illegal substances, etc., so as to ensure attorney/client privilege insofar as the written content of legal documents is protected.)

Peltier and his fellow prisoners have spent the majority of September under lockdown, as has been the case for most of 2023. Leonard Peltier Ad Hoc Committee

This means that in prisons that aren't respecting the right of every person to private legal counsel, prison officials can hypothetically be tipped to sexual abuse allegations in violation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act, class-action lawsuits or any number of legal issues which should fall under attorney/client confidentiality.

As investigations from the Associated Press and The Appeal have made clear, a culture of retaliation within the federal prison system has resulted in the fact that prisoners are afraid of disclosing too much about what they are enduring. Former BOP Director Michael Carvajal was forced to resign in January 2022 because of revelations of widespread abuse within the federal prison system, including the arrests, sentencing and convictions of more than 100 BOP workers since 2019. His replacement, BOP Director Colette Peters, promised a new and more transparent era for the BOP. Thus far, critics within Congress have been outspoken about the lack of progress under Peters' leadership.

The situation at USP Coleman I certainly hasn't improved since Peters took the helm. Family and friends of people imprisoned at USP Coleman I are saying that, where they once received daily or weekly calls, emails and letters, they now go long periods of time with no contact whatsoever. People incarcerated at Coleman I tell a similar story of once having received frequent communications from family members, but now going long periods without receiving outside mail.

When given the opportunity to comment on this situation, the BOP Public Affairs Office responded:

All Adults in Custody (AIC) at USP Coleman I are afforded communication privileges through written communication by way of the U.S. Postal Service. The Federal Bureau of Prisons recognizes the importance for Adults in Custody (AIC) to maintain family and community ties and continually encourages AICs to participate in visitation as one means of achieving this. However, the safety of employees, AICs, and the public is one of our highest priorities, and sometimes the modification or temporary suspension of visitation is necessary.

Ongoing Lockdowns Cause Misery and Cut Off Contact With Loved Ones

Under these lockdown conditions, incarcerated people like Peltier are (sometimes) given three 10-minute showers per week, but they claim that "recreation" (i.e., the guaranteed right to have some form of exercise outside of one's own cell) has been nearly nonexistent. As a result, many or most days are spent in 24-hour isolation. (Although most men are double-celled, the term isolation is still used as the prisoners have no contact with family, friends or other prisoners as they would in normal general population conditions.)

A total lack of opportunity to exercise one's body is a violation of BOP regulations pertaining to even the most secure federal facilities such as the notorious supermax prison, ADX Florence, and two secretive Communication Management Units created as a response to the "war on terror."

In all BOP prisons, imprisoned persons are supposed to be given at least one hour of recreation time, albeit often in depressing, concrete-walled environments. Depending on the prison, this may mean the opportunity to simply walk or run, while other prisons allow prisoners to lift weights or play sports.

Dawn Lawson, Peltier's personal assistant for several years, was adopted into a Lakota family after her own torturous experience of being sexually assaulted at a federal prison. According to Lawson, she ended up at an "Indian recovery center" in South Dakota, and this led to an eventual friendship with Peltier. Although she is severely and chronically ill, Lawson sends daily email and post to Peltier. Lawson shared that she would normally get multiple emails back from Peltier daily, but now often goes days and weeks without hearing back.

Lawson, who knows the most about Peltier's situation over the last several years, explained that sometimes he is not able to make phone calls because he cannot hold his own against much younger men fighting over

the one or two working phones, where there were once many. Fortunately, some of the men respect his status as an elder and spiritual leader and try to help him get through to his attorney and his assistant, said Jones, Peltier's attorney. "The situation breeds a total sense of helplessness," added Lawson. "They are killing these men."

Lawson is not exaggerating. During the course of this investigation, many men have sent word to a spokesperson for the prisoners who, in turn, reported through his attorney that, according to their count, a total of 16 men have died in the FCC Coleman complex in 2023, under unknown and sometimes suspicious circumstances. Because this spokesperson (and the prisoners who have communicated these details to him) fear retaliation, *Truthout* is not revealing their names.

Men are doubly impacted if they are in the Security Housing Unit in addition to being on lockdown. As communication from the SHU under lockdown is even more limited, almost nothing is known about these men other than the fact that one man recently died by suicide. The BOP has refused to comment on the suicide, citing privacy, security and safety concerns.

Another concern is that men who already suffer from mental health issues are deteriorating, as the rounds that guards used to take to monitor their well-being have lessened or no longer happen at all, according to the same prisoner spokesperson. Others, who did not struggle with mental health issues previously, have begun to speak of ending their lives.

The constant lockdowns made it difficult for me to build prisoner networks within USP Coleman I, as I have done for decades in various jails and prisons across the country, but fortunately, prisoners, lawyers, and advocates were still able to share their experiences. In so doing, they also spoke of pent-up aggression and frustration manifesting in fights on a scale never seen before. Consider that these men are locked down for days or weeks on end without the ability to shower regularly or to exercise at all. When they are released simultaneously into the room containing one or two working phones, fights can understandably break out quickly. In a matter of minutes, yet another lockdown is instituted, and the cycle begins again.

Although the BOP denies all of this, it is hardly far-fetched that arguments and physical altercations can break out between traumatized prisoners desperate to reach their loved ones very quickly, leading to severe injuries as in a case in 2022 in which a Coleman prisoner lost an eye and another was flown to a hospital. Since the Pandemic Began, an Even Crueler "New Normal" Has Been Imposed in Prisons

Everything began with COVID, said Victoria Law, a journalist and frequent *Truthout* contributor who specializes in the United States criminal legal system and has a forthcoming book on COVID and prisons, slated for publication in 2024.

"The COVID pandemic was a prime opportunity for the prisons to double down on punitive measures and then to keep them going," said Law in an interview with *Truthout*.

"They used the pretense of the pandemic to say that this was all for the health and safety of prisoners, but the pandemic allowed jails and prisons to make the institutions more onerous. It became the 'new normal,'" Law said.

According to *The Marshall Project* and *Solitary Watch*, 300,000 prisoners were held in some form of solitary at the height of the COVID pandemic, compared to the usual number which ranges from 50,000-100,000. (The Bureau of Justice Statistics doesn't keep tabs on this number, so the wide range is the result of differing analysis.)

The picture becomes even more grim when January 2022 is taken into account. It was then that the BOP "accomplished" something rather troubling; the agency locked down all of its prisons for roughly a week — including women's prisons — in response to an MS-13 gang fight at a Texas prison in which two men were

killed. Essentially, 150,000 individuals were suddenly confined to some form of solitary after an incident in just one facility in one state.

The lockdown precedent was actually set in June 2020, with the first nationwide federal prison lockdown in 25 years. In response to protests across the U.S. following the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man killed by police in Minneapolis in May 2020, the BOP decided that the unrest could spill into prisons. Until this point, the BOP had considered national lockdowns an extreme and clearly unnecessary measure, even if fights occurred between prisoners, as this is a daily occurrence in most men's prisons.

The current situation at Coleman is undoubtedly the worst within the entire, sprawling BOP system. But many other states seem to be taking note, and have also instituted total lockdowns, including one that dragged on for many months in Wisconsin. Although it's unclear what the current status of the lockdown is right now, what is known is that, as of August 2023, male prisoners had already suffered extreme lockdown restrictions for more than four months.

Constant Lockdowns Are Having a Devastating Effect on Peltier's Health, Cousin Says

Paulette D'Auteuil-Robideau, Peltier's cousin, lives in Gainesville, Florida, not far from Coleman. She serves on the board of the new Leonard Peltier Ad Hoc Committee, as well as the Jericho Movement for Political Prisoners. D'Auteuil-Robideau has traveled across the world to talk to audiences about Peltier and the plight of political prisoners, the existence of which the U.S. continues to officially deny.

The Leonard Peltier Ad Hoc Committee is the only organization that Peltier currently authorizes to speak on his behalf, sell his artwork, and to manage the donations that help cover his legal expenses and meager commissary budget.

D'Auteuil-Robideau told *Truthout* that guards have clearly been using lockdowns as a way of extending their weekends, as many lockdowns "coincidentally" begin sometime on Thursday and end, however briefly, on Monday or Tuesday.

In addition, D'Auteuil-Robideau said she is worried that Peltier has paid an egregious cost with his health. Diagnosed with diabetes a few decades ago, Peltier was able to get the disease under control by exercising regularly and supplementing the sugar and carb-laden prison diet with commissary products, as well as drinking more bottled water.

Peltier's diabetes eventually went into remission, but it returned after the imposition of COVID restrictions and the 2023 lockdowns, which have limited Peltier's diet to what is shoved through his cell door. Moreover, both D'Auteuil-Robideau and Peltier's attorney said that since there is no medical line during lockdowns, he must rely on nurses remembering to do a finger stick test once daily, and that Peltier has not been given glucose tablets or juice to help him if he begins to go into a diabetic coma.

Once again, the BOP flatly denies that this is true, and says all incarcerated people have access to medical and dental care, including glucose tabs and diabetic dietary meals.

But Peltier has already lost all of his teeth over the past 10 years at Coleman, as Jones explained, and he has not been given prosthetics, making food very difficult to eat. Dental and medical care are bad under the best of circumstances, she said, but under lockdown, they are nearly nonexistent.

Because of the size of the cells, the aging Peltier has not been able to move more than a few inches in two directions each day, and his body is suffering for it. But Peltier isn't just concerned for himself.

In August 2023, Peltier said he witnessed through his cell window another person incarcerated at Coleman being taken from a nearby cell on a stretcher, as the lack of exercise had atrophied his muscles to the point

that he could no longer walk. According to Peltier, prisoners have spoken of other similar incidents throughout USP Coleman I, where nearly 1,500 prisoners are held.

"These lockdowns are killing us old guys," Peltier told *Truthout* through his assistant during a brief lockdown break in September. "Not enough exercise for our legs. I had a hell of a time walking the yard. Even with my walker, I had to stop and rest often."

Jenipher Jones, who has served as Peltier's lead attorney since May, concurred that Peltier's health has suffered as a result of the lockdowns.

When asked to respond to these allegations, a representative from the BOP's Public Affairs office offered this statement:

While we do not comment on anecdotal accusations, we can tell you this is absurd and untrue. While for privacy reasons we cannot speak about the conditions of confinement for any individual, I can tell you the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) provides essential medical, dental, and mental health services in a manner consistent with accepted community standards for a correctional environment. The FBOP uses licensed and credentialed healthcare providers in its ambulatory care units, which are supported by community consultants and specialists. All incarcerated individuals have daily and regular access to psychological and medical care.

In late May, Peltier sent a group email to some of the people he is allowed to keep on his approved email list (the prison only allows him to maintain a maximum of 30 approved contacts). Lawson, his personal assistant, shared a copy with *Truthout*. Peltier had just been released from yet another lockdown and wrote that "being in such a small space at my age is not ... pleasant to have to go through. It is like torture. Your body gets to hurting from lack of exercise and movement."

Peltier's Lawyer Says Ongoing Lockdowns Are Creating Barriers to Legal Counsel

Peltier's current legal team complains that the ongoing lockdowns at Coleman I are routinely impeding their ability to meet and speak with their client.

In addition to lead attorney Jones, the legal team also includes two other lawyers in New York and Florida. Attorney Kevin Sharp represents Peltier separately on a current compassionate release petition.

Jones is a civil movement and human rights attorney and managing partner at A People's Law office/For the People, LLC. Her work challenging the system of mass incarceration has resulted in binding affirmative federal law regarding the constitutional rights of prisoners in the U.S. Jones specializes in litigating complex civil litigation cases involving the rights of political prisoners, employment discrimination and law enforcement/correctional officer misconduct. Jones also teaches law students regarding constitutional carceral law and "movement" lawyering, and is the current chair of the National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee and joint chair of the Mass Incarceration Committee.

Jones told *Truthout* that regardless of what the BOP says about the availability of legal meetings for all prisoners who ask for them, she has not been granted regular access to legal meetings with her client. Because of the nonstop lockdowns, Jones said she has only been able to visit Peltier twice between May 2023 and September 2023 and is only able to speak to him when he is briefly let off lockdown.

Unidentified Coleman staff warned Dan Battaglia, Peltier's adopted nephew, of a "summer of lockdowns" when he called to inquire about visiting his uncle. USP Coleman I also began demanding background checks on attorneys, although such procedure had previously been unheard of. The BOP Public Affairs office flatly denied this assertion in a statement to *Truthout*. Jones said that, starting in August, Coleman finally stopped requiring background checks on attorneys and returned to just asking for proof of Bar membership.

Jones told me that her most recent visit with Peltier, which occurred in early September, was a traumatic experience which left her deeply troubled and worried for the safety of all the men imprisoned in Coleman, including Peltier and one other client she works with there. Jones said she made a trip to Coleman for a three-day visit. The first two days went well, but on the third day, Jones was left waiting for Peltier for two hours as the staff attempted to force her into meeting her client in the general visiting room, which affords none of the privacy guaranteed to lawyers and their clients.

Although the prison staff eventually relented and allowed Jones and Peltier to sit in a private room intended for legal visits, Jones said she had spent no more than 20 minutes with Peltier when an "institutional emergency" was announced, possibly because of the presence of a film crew that had been pre-approved to film in certain areas for a Peltier documentary.

Chaos broke out, Jones said, with guards rushing to hand back IDs to visiting families. Children were crying and screaming, and one adult visitor was left in a corridor within the prison as a heavy steel door began to close, threatening to lock him in. Jones said a 4-year-old child who saw the man and squeezed between the door jamb and the steel door to try to save him from being locked inside narrowly escaped getting crushed by the door herself.

All the while, Jones said, the corralled prisoners stood together, screaming out to the gathered attorneys and loved ones: "Help us! They do this to us all the time! Please help!" Jones recalled them yelling in anguish, with pained and desperate expressions. As a result, Jones was never able to see her other client and returned home in a state of shock.

In the time since then, leading up to the week of September 18, prisoners received a total of roughly six hours out of their cells before being locked down again, according to a *Truthout* analysis.

As Peltier made clear in a discussion with his attorney (a portion of which Peltier allowed to be shared with *Truthout* for this article), he and the other prisoners at Coleman I could not perceive any reason for an institutional emergency on the day his legal meeting with Jones was interrupted; prisoners were locked down regardless. Finally, during one rare hour of time in the yard, Peltier spoke of being so physically weak from nearly 10 months of lack of movement that he could barely walk, even with his walker.

Jones, meanwhile, told *Truthout* she believes that Coleman has essentially become a "black site," as almost nothing is known about what is happening inside, and prisoners have clearly lost their right to communicate freely with the outside world.

Peltier Vows to Keep Fighting for Freedom Amid the Ongoing Lockdowns

One of the U.S.'s longest-suffering political prisoners, Peltier — a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribe who is of Lakota and Dakota descent — considers himself a spiritual warrior whose commitment to Native peoples and human rights is unbreakable. He received a double life sentence for the alleged murder of two armed FBI agents in a shoot-out on the impoverished Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1975, and has spent roughly 48 years in prison despite an abundance of evidence that the FBI coerced, harassed, and manipulated testimony and ballistics evidence during his 1977 trial.

In the full statement he wrote to be delivered to assembled protesters on September 12, 2023, Peltier stated:

Everything has been done to break my spirit. Every last shred of evidence used to convict me has been proven false. Because of this false evidence and unfair trial, even the International Criminal Court has noted the deep injustice of my case.... The trial was ... riddled with racism by the presiding judge and the suppression of key evidence. Not to mention being separated from my co-defendants. I was placed on death row and in solitary confinement to coerce a false statement, which I refused to give. Just for defending myself and my people against a colonial state massacring and terrorizing my people. In 1976, I was protecting people from being murdered. There were over 60 people killed. The federal government will not investigate those murders because our killers, the GOON Squad, admitted that the FBI was supplying the weapons and ammunition used against us. A trail of bodies, that era tinged and stained in

blood. Mass sterilizations of all genders were taking place. Our children kidnapped. Our language and right to bear arms, forbidden. This is nothing short of genocide. I will never forget. Colonization requires erasure: genocide, homicide and extermination. They wanted nothing less than the extermination of our people, and uranium. They wanted to force the mining on our reservation. Disrespecting the land, poisoning the waters, which still causes high rates of cancer. I stood in their way.

Notably, as Peltier was sentenced before the passage of a sentencing reform bill that essentially eliminated federal parole, he should have already been paroled. All recent presidents have rejected his applications for clemency, despite decades of outcry from world leaders and a powerful July 2022 statement from the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention calling for his release, noting that anti-Indigenous racism is a primary factor in Peltier's continued incarceration.

Coleen Rowley, a retired FBI special agent, recently became the first intelligence insider to argue for Peltier's release.

"Retribution seems to have emerged as the primary if not sole reason for continuing what looks from the outside to have become an emotion-driven 'FBI Family' vendetta," Rowley wrote in a letter sent to President Joe Biden in December 2022.

"Enough is enough," Rowley added. "Leonard Peltier should now be allowed to go home."

Native Americans and Alaskan Natives are grossly over-represented in juvenile facilities, jails, state and federal prisons. Currently, Indigenous people are locked in prisons at a rate of 763 per 100,000 people, double the national rate (350 per 100,000) and more than four times the rate of white Americans (181 per 100,000). In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has increased the number of Natives imprisoned in "Indian jails" over the past two decades.

The most frightening aspect of the constant lockdowns at Coleman I is that the prisoners there never know how long they will be isolated. Lawson, Peltier's personal assistant, has gotten to the point that she checks his BOP prisoner profile every single day when she doesn't hear from him to see if he is listed as deceased.

Peltier is certainly no stranger to isolation, as he has already spent at least 15 years in solitary — including a stint on death row, the rationale for which was never explained to him. But Peltier told *Truthout* that the conditions that he and his fellow prisoners have endured this year at Coleman I have surpassed anything he has ever experienced, even in many of the most oppressive prisons in the U.S.

"We live under worse conditions than those in solitary confinement," Peltier told *Truthout* in an email communique passed on by Lawson. Being locked down 24/7 "in a cement and steel box is even illegal for dogs or other animals," he emphasized.

According to Peltier and the prisoner spokesperson whose identity is being protected, as well as Lawson and Jones, there have been extended lockdowns every month from January onward. One month, July, was locked down completely, with no opportunity to move whatsoever but a few inches inside one's own cell.

That five-week lockdown began on July 9 and didn't end until August 14, 2023, as the BOP itself verified, in addition to *Truthout's* monitoring of the situation. During this time, Peltier wrote that each prisoner's commissary budget was reduced to \$25. "We received it two times (in July and August), and \$25 isn't much with today's prices," he told *Truthout*. The BOP countered that commissary has been available to all prisoners on a rotating basis.

Peltier is referring to the fact that BOP prices for many commissary items have increased this year by as much as 300 percent, according to BOP prisoners in various institutions. "Our food rations have been cut drastically," Peltier added, noting that this makes commissary purchases even more important for those who can afford them. In another response, Peltier emphasized that he had to resort to taking "sink baths."

Jones has noted that prisoners have not had adequate hygiene products throughout the year, increasing the risk of communicable diseases. Food trays are delivered to the cells through slots, sometimes consisting of brown lettuce and green baloney, according to Lawson. Under normal conditions, Coleman I prisoners eat together at the chow hall.

This is the life that Peltier and all other USP Coleman I prisoners have lived under for most of 2023, with no end in sight.

Jones was told, at one point, that the reason for the five-week lockdown had to do with a discovered plot to attack guards by gang members who were subsequently relocated to other prisons. It is unclear, however, why the lockdowns have continued even after the people who supposedly developed the plot were removed from the premises.

"We are actually being punished for nothing," Peltier told *Truthout*, via Jones, in answer to prepared questions *Truthout* sent in the event the lockdown might be lifted once again.

In this case, Peltier was let out of his cell for less than four hours on September 19, 2023, and informed *Truthout* through Jones that, "They wouldn't even let me go to the shower on Monday because I need my walker, and they wanted me handcuffed."

Among the other indignities that Peltier continues to suffer are full cavity searches before and after meetings with legal counsel, as well as X-rays after family and friend visitations (on the rare occasion that he gets them). Curiously, Peltier was given years of radiation "therapy" despite having no medical condition that would have required such a procedure. Jones and Lawson are both concerned that the cumulative radiation has wreaked havoc on his body.

For Peltier, days like this are like most others in 2023. But these days have not been ordinary or predictable. Nor have they been carefully timed with movements between cells and showers, the recreation yard, programming, medical lines, an art room or a sweat lodge. The latter two, in addition to outside recreation time, mean the most for Peltier, whose half-century in prison has given him very little by way of joyful moments. The very title of his book, *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sundance*, is a reference to the once banned spiritual practice of hanging from hooks that are pierced through the skin, a powerful spiritual sacrifice ritual in which Peltier has participated.

Whether Coleman is a harbinger of things to come has yet to be seen, but the trend toward keeping prisoners isolated from media, family and legal counsel has led Jones to devote herself to Peltier's case, working on it seven days a week. A soft-spoken woman with profound insight and dedication, Jones told *Truthout* she fears that the BOP will continue to expand the methods by which outspoken prisoners (and those who support them) are repressed, tortured or even killed.

"We do not throw away anyone," said Jones in reference to prisoners across the nation. "No matter what they may or may not have been accused or convicted of. And so, while we will work with the Bureau of Prisons where we can, we unwaveringly stand with men of USP Coleman I and will utilize every available lawful means to vindicate their constitutional and human rights, thus the rights of everyone, including ourselves."

"We do not stand apart from the men of USP Coleman I or any prisoner," Jones added with tremendous conviction. "Their fate is our national lot."

4 Oct - The Reservoir Issue 2 Launch Party

WHAT: Launch Party

WHEN: 7:00pm, Wednesday, October 4th

WHERE: Trans Pecos - 915 Wyckoff Avenue, Ridgewood, Queens

MORE:

Woodbine is releasing the second issue of *The Reservoir, Communion*, this month, published with Autonomedia. This issue features new texts by Kazembe Balagun, Elizabeth Povinelli, Geert Lovink, Kristin Ross, Experimental Jetset, Marcello Tari, as well as a previously unpublished interview with Félix Guattari. There's original art, comics, essays, fiction, illustrations, interviews, letters, photography, poetry, transcripts, and translations from more than 30 contributors, with design by Kevin McCaughey.

From the introduction: "The theme for this issue, *Belief and the Communal*, was a question to ourselves – not just a documentation of who and what we are, but a critical consideration of who we would like to be. To speak of belief carries with it the sense not just of logic but of faith. History tells us that successful experiments in communal life often have an organizing belief. They have a shared faith. But when our structures of life are oriented around the instrumental and utilitarian, the non-religious and secular, how can we re-enchant the world, the city, each other? How can we mobilize networks of newly binding enchantments for the next epoch of societal re-organization? For us this question touches on the old anarchist framework of free association, of the voluntary assembly of individuals. Needed ever-more in a metropolis like New York, but ever rarer and fleeting. It touches on the question of desire, to gather outside of work, outside of the market, to cultivate a generosity of thought and spirit, of time and attention."

Woodbine is throwing a launch party for *The Reservoir* featuring performances by Eros Tunnel, Kwami Winfield & C. Spencer Yeh, and Sub Rosa, with DJ sets by Lychee and Slimey.

8 Oct - MACC Care Assembly

WHAT: Assembly

WHEN: 3:00pm, Sunday, October 8th

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

COST: FREE

MORE:

SCHEDULE:

- o Self-defense class Muay Thai Martial arts training - no experience necessary, show up at 3 pm
- o Political education session
- o 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: Show a negative rapid test; free tests will be provided at the door.

13/15 Oct - Weelaunee Defense Tour

WHAT: Presentation

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, October 13th; 5:00pm, Sunday, October 15th

WHERE: CUNY Graduate Center, Room 4202, 365 5th Avenue, Manhattan; Woodbine - 585 Woodward Avenue, Ridgewood, Queens

COST: FREE

MORE:

There are TWO mass action speaking tour events happening in NYC, October 13 at CUNY Graduate Center and October 15 at Woodbine. Come, learn, and get involved!