



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for January 14th

25 Dec - In search of a sound – lessons from bamboo

Veronza Bowers, now 46 years in federal prison, survives and enables others to heal by blowing his beloved Shakuhachi bamboo flute. He writes about how he learned of its magical healing power.

MORE:

by Veronza Bowers (*San Francisco Bay View*)

In the spring of 1985, I was gifted with a beautiful wooden recorder from a friend from Lebanon. I immediately fell in love with its sound. That sound led me to the C-concert flute and a long horizontally held bamboo flute. I spent many hours each day blowing and learning.

In the evenings, because I lived in a single occupancy cell, I would practice softly blowing my bamboo. On the wall, I had a bigger than life-sized picture of the beautiful Winnie Mandela – just her face with those big pools of Black African Magic Woman’s eyes casting a spell on me.

I would just get lost in her eyes and blow ever so softly. From that blowing, a sweet melody was born and became a song with a jazz band and I called it “Ode To Winnie” – with lyrics. We entered a talent show and won first place and had to do an encore, to a standing ovation.

In 1987, I was transferred from USP Lompoc in California to a state prison in Washington and couldn’t take my instruments and found myself NEEDING TO BLOW. While thumbing through a *Mother Jones* magazine, I ran across an advertisement of a man who made bamboo flutes and Shakuhachi. Never having heard of Shakuhachi, I ordered a bamboo flute from Monty Levenson – and thus began a lifetime friendship.

Whooooaaa, the sound of breath sliding across bamboo was sooo much different from the sounds of my silver flute and wooden recorder. But in order to play it required that I spend a lot of time stretching my fingers wider apart to be able to cover the holes. I was too impatient for that, so I contacted Monty and told him that I wanted to exchange it for one of his student model Shakuhachi.

When my Shakuhachi arrived, I didn’t have a clue as to how to even produce a sound. I spent weeks trying to figure it out, blowing across each of the four holes on the top side of my 1-foot-8-inch piece of bamboo. THAT couldn’t be the way to make music with it. Then one day it was as though my Shakuhachi said, “Blow me like you used to blow soda pop bottles when you were a little boy.”

Ahhh, THAT was THE sound I’d been searching for! From that day on, the bamboo of the Shakuhachi became my teacher, my Sen-sei! I would blow for hours each day. I would blow one single note (one sound, if you will) and hold it for as long as I could, making it as whole and as beautiful and sweet as I could. With my eyes closed, I would watch and listen to that single note expand to its fullness and gradually fade into a haunting, yet as beautiful and sweet SILENCE.

Then, in 1990, I was transferred to USP Terre Haute, Indiana. There I established a meditation group and called it Meditation Healing with Shakuhachi. The following is an account written by me in 1990 of an amazing healing experience we all participated in. It was published in *The Annals of the International Shakuhachi Society* and in *The Journal of Noetic Science* – quite an honor.

Meditation healing with Shakuhachi

I have lived the past 24 [now 46] years of my life as a federal prisoner with the Bureau of Prisons number 35316-136 appended to my name. For those of you who have never been inside a maximum security penitentiary, it might be difficult, if not impossible, to imagine it is a place where the plaintive sounds of Shakuhachi can be heard. Ah! But it is true.

I am honored and happy to be able to share with you a story about a young man – whom doctors had told would never walk again – and a piece of bamboo. This is a story of the human spirit and will at their finest, and a story of the healing power that is within Shakuhachi. In 1987, this young man (let's call him Punchy) was shot in the back in Detroit, Michigan. The shot and subsequent operation left him completely paralyzed from the waist down. Call it coincidence, fate or simply the way things happen, but in that very same year I was introduced to Shakuhachi by a man named Monty H. Levenson, Shakuhachi maker and now dear friend.

Three years later, on the recreation yard of Terre Haute Federal Penitentiary in Indiana, I first saw Punchy – he, being pushed in his wheelchair around the quarter mile track; me, sitting under the shade of a lone tree blowing my Shakuhachi. I closed my eyes and continued to blow. The song in my heart reflected what I had just seen and my Shakuhachi began to cry.

After about two weeks of watching Punchy go for his daily ride, I made arrangements through one of his drivers to meet him. I explained to Punchy that I practiced an ancient art called Hands on Healing. I explained about Touch for Health, Acupressure, Tsubo Therapy, Shiatsu Therapy, Jin Shin Do, Massage Therapy and Meditation Healing using sounds and colors.

We talked about Chi and the circulation of energy, chakras, stretching as well as other kinds of physical therapy and exercise. I looked into his eyes and told him I'd like to try to help him. Although he had never heard of such things and was unable to hide his skepticism, he agreed.

Where? How to begin? That was the burning question in my mind as we made arrangements to meet the following afternoon. I knew that I would have to examine his entire body from head to toe and would have to work with him daily for quite a long time. We would have to be committed to each other and to ourselves. This would involve much work, way beyond physical therapy.

As agreed, we began the following day. After a solid month – six days a week, two and a half hours a day – of breathing exercises, acupressure treatments, stretching etc., we were basically where we were when we started. Punchy was locked up inside of himself where I could not touch.

I knew that unless he would allow me to come in, unless he could open up and share with me his deepest pain, no amount of massage and manipulation of muscles, no amount of stimulation of nerves, no amount of stretching, no amount of anything would result in an improvement of his condition.

Were the doctors, with their professional diagnosis, correct in their approach? Or was Punchy, a young man, who had so much energy inside of himself, being sentenced to a wheelchair for the rest of his life? Is it true that the solution – if there is a solution – to any problem lies within the problem itself? A breakthrough was needed.

I had recently started conducting meditation sessions with members of our Rastafarian Community in the chapel during which I blow Shakuhachi. I asked Punchy to attend. For this special session I gathered together seven men, all physically strong and emotionally and spiritually well-balanced.

The seven men would represent the Sun, the Moon, Mother Earth and the Four Directions – North, East, South and West. I explained to them Punchy's condition and what was needed of each man as well as all of them as a collective body. The following is part of a Self-Monitoring Cross-Consciousness account of our first meditation healing session written immediately following the session by Darrell, one of the participants.

“A wounded Brother was placed on his back in the center of the room. We were instructed to form a circle around him, lying on our backs with our heads nearest to him and focus upon channeling positive energy so that he might be healed.

“We were instructed to breathe in a rhythmic and harmonious flow, inhaling deeply to the count of five and exhaling deeply to the count of five until we were in perfect unison. A flute began to play. With my eyes closed, I can hear the melody uttering words of transient delight, making it hard to resist complete relaxation. I have given myself totally to the Wounded One.

“There is a light. I used it to focus on as I attempted to channel my energy towards the Wounded One. I concentrated on the lower half of his body, for he was unable to walk. The light was drawing near and growing dim, the musical sounds freeing me from anxiety. The light now, ever so near and dimmer still, as the sounds of winds from the flute hovered over my body. I am conscious as my body releases the tension from the controlled breathing and begins to act upon its own to recover its natural pace. The hollow sounds of beauty making me ever so comfortable as the dimness of the light slowly turned to a red.

“The flute player is standing over me. I am aware of his presence, but why am I moaning? Why can I not respond to acknowledge him? Where am I? Can I help my wounded Brother, and who and where are the drummers? My body won’t respond, but I am conscious. I can hear everything and the breaths of everyone; we are all breathing out of time. Everyone has lost the rhythm except the flutist. He has acted as a tour guide down the pathway of total redness, almost leading me towards serenity, if it weren’t for the pain. What pain? Whose pain? So much pain – but why am I still moaning? Where am I?

“It appears that I have allowed the flutist, the tour guide, to take me beyond the realms of my control. I can sense serenity, but the pain. Oh! The pain! And why do I feel as if I’m not alone? The corridor, or pathway, which has turned blue some time ago is now glowing and has a strange aura. The silence broke. ‘Rub your hands together’ It was the familiar voice of the tour guide, and I made motions with my hands, which, which was all I could do to make him aware that the command had been heard.

“I didn’t quite know how to function, for I was distant, incoherent and a slight bit delirious; but I could sense that he knew, for I was still trapped in space. ‘Rub your hands together so they generate energy, and then rub the warmth over your face. Wash your face with energy.’ I was able to comprehend the fact that this was, no doubt, a command, and I found myself obedient, my body began to respond, my eyes opened. It was over.”

After the session had ended and everyone else had returned to this plane, Punchy was still out. When he finally awoke, he blurted out, “What happened? Where I been?” Everyone laughed.

I was terribly excited and anxious to talk with the Brother who had been moaning and rolling his head back and forth. I needed to know what he had seen, what he had experienced. He and I got together immediately after everyone had left the chapel. As I blew Shaku-hachi at the top of the stairwell, he recorded what you have just read.

Ahhh! The breakthrough! On so many levels. A small piece of bamboo, 1-foot-8-inches long, had opened doorways which had previously been welded shut. Shaku-hachi had done in one and a half hours what no human being had done in three years. Shaku-hachi had made it possible, via Darrell’s psychic bonding with Punchy, to connect with and to deeply understand Punchy’s psychological and spiritual pain. During our next working session, Punchy and I discussed all that we had both learned and for the first time he opened up completely.

From then on, we began each working session with Shaku-hachi. A healthy diet with vitamins, a combination of disciplines mentioned earlier, meditation and circulation of Chi, weight lifting for upper body strength, stretching, stretching and more stretching for leg strength – the strength of the tiger lies in

his flexibility – and a determined will, all combined so that by the end of the summer, 10 months after our first meditation healing session, on Dec, 10, 1990, Punchy could do 100 full squats non-stop, walk five steps on his own, and walk behind his wheelchair with me sitting in it and push me one full lap around the quarter-mile track on the yard.

I wish I had more space to share with you the details of this inspiring struggle of a young man determined to walk again and the neverending mystery that is Shakuhachi. I am deeply thankful to my dear friend Monty for introducing me to Shakuhachi, and I am eternally grateful to Shakuhachi for so graciously accepting my breath and for allowing me to be an extension through which healing can pass.

Healing the healer

In 1998, I was transferred to FCI Coleman, Florida, the first medium custody prison I was sent to after having been in maximum security USPs for 27 years. Shortly after my arrival, I established the All Faith Meditation Group.

Once the warden saw that we were serious and many men joined with us, he allowed us to have a five-day Meditation Retreat. That attracted the attention of the Dharma instructor of the Gateless Gate Meditation Center in Gainesville, Florida.

To the honor and delight of all of us he brought with him a Rimpoche (Monk) from Tibet – and 38 men of our group attended. I was given the honor of blowing Shakuhachi for the first and last hour of each session for the entire retreat.

Upon hearing the first note of my Shakuhachi, the Rimpoche was moved to tears. Later, through his interpreter, he said: “I was so overwhelmed by the beauty and purity of that single sound, my tears flowed freely from my thankful heart. It reminded me of home.” He bowed and I bowed – and we all bowed to him and he bowed to us.

In May of 2017, I was diagnosed as having lymphoma (a cancer that attacks and invades the lymphatic system), and transferred to the Federal Medical Center in Butner, N.C., to undergo chemotherapy. My white cell blood count became so low my immune system was compromised and I contracted pneumonia. I was moved from the fourth floor to the fifth and hooked up to an IV machine that pumped antibiotics into my bloodstream. (For a detailed account, please see “Veronza, don’t die in prison!” in the Bay View.)

A good friend of mine was in a room – a cell – three doors down from me. I went to visit him and was shocked and pained to see how the cancer had eaten away his body, and his legs and stomach were sooo badly swollen. Sighhh. He was in a constant and terrible pain.

I went back to my room/cell and fetched my Shakuhachi. Even though I was very weak myself from the pneumonia, I leaned against a wall in his room/cell, closed my eyes and just BLEW my Shakuhachi. After about 10 minutes, I opened my eyes and saw my friend smiling, even as tears streamed down his face. He said: “Brother Veronza, that was sooo beautiful. ALL of my pain just went away. It was like those sounds was a river and the pain got washed away by the current.”

From that day on until he was moved into the hospice area, despite my own weakness, I would will myself to go to his room/cell and BLOW Shakuhachi for him – and for me – and for all the other sick and dying men in rooms/cells on that floor. My friend passed away – all alone in hospice.

There is sooo much more I’d love to share with you about my wondrous journey with Shakuhachi and the effects it has and continues to have on me and the people who have been touched and moved by its sounds and SILENCES.

But for now, I just want to thank my dear friend Monty Levenson for introducing me to Shakuichi – and I thank the bamboo that is Shakuichi for being my Sen-sei and teaching me to blow and for accepting my breath and allowing me to be a vessel through which healing and peace can pass on to others.

In Emptiness and Nothingness

26 Dec - What the Prison-Abolition Movement Wants

Kim Kelly dives into the prison-abolition movement for her latest op-ed.

MORE:

by Kim Kelly (*Teen Vogue*)

Why do we take prison for granted? Esteemed American author, activist, and professor Angela Davis posed the question in her 2003 treatise *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, a work that encouraged readers to interrogate their understanding of the U.S. prison system. Davis, an abolitionist, rejected the idea of stopping at reform, arguing that focusing on making small improvements inside the walls decenters the larger goal of decarceration, the process of freeing people from institutions like prisons and detention centers.

“Prison abolitionists are dismissed as utopians and idealists whose ideas are at best unrealistic and impracticable, and, at worst, mystifying and foolish,” Davis wrote. “This is a measure of how difficult it is to envision a social order that does not rely on the threat of sequestering people in dreadful places designed to separate them from their communities and families. The prison is considered so ‘natural’ that it is extremely hard to imagine life without it.”

Sixteen years later, society at large is still struggling to provide an answer to her query, or to meaningfully address the plague of mass incarceration, even as conversations around criminal justice reform and abolishing the death penalty have picked up steam in the political arena. However, prison abolitionists — those fellow “utopians” and “idealists” Davis mentioned — have not only been able to imagine a world without cages, but have spent decades working to bring that vision closer to reality, in places as far-flung as Washington’s Walla Walla State Penitentiary and New York City’s notorious Rikers Island. So what does it actually mean to envision that kind of world?

Prison abolition is at its core an ideological and political organizing project that seeks to not only tear down existing prisons and jails, but to create an equitable society which addresses the core problems that lead to incarceration, thereby rendering imprisonment — itself a form of punitive torture — obsolete. Its proponents view restorative justice and community investment as more humane, equitable means of addressing social ills and reducing violence. They seek to end the criminalization and persecution of marginalized communities, particularly those living in poverty. As Ava DuVernay’s 2016 documentary on prison slavery, *13th*, laid out with wrenching precision, the U.S. criminal justice system was crafted from the beginning as an instrument of racist terror (it’s no surprise that DuVernay identifies as a prison abolitionist herself), whereas the abolition movement operates from an explicitly intersectional, racial-justice-focused perspective.

The movement has been around for decades, and came to prominence in California in the 1990s with the founding of the Critical Resistance project, a national anti-prison organization with an abolitionist focus that was cofounded by Davis and professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore. An influential model laid out by the Prison Research Education Action Project in a 1976 pamphlet highlighted three pillars of abolition: moratorium (a ceasing of construction on new prisons), decarceration, and excarceration (diverting people away from situations that may bring them into contact with law enforcement and the prospect of prison). Examples of excarceration can include decriminalizing drug use, decriminalizing sex work, or effectively combating homelessness.

Prison abolition differs from the prison-reform movement in that its focus is on overhauling the entire system, not making improvements to existing structures — though some abolitionists incorporate elements

of reform into their work as a form of harm reduction for the people who are currently in prison. Prison abolitionists call for dismantling the police (and Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and redistributing the resources used to fund them back into housing, health, and economic opportunities for underserved communities who suffer most from systemic inequality and deprivation.

They also point toward the U.S. capitalist economic system as a major cause of the conditions that have led to the current crisis of mass incarceration. “Capitalism has to go,” abolitionist and educator Mariame Kaba told MSNBC’s Chris Hayes. “It has to be abolished. We live within a system that’s got all these other ‘isms,’ and we’re gonna have to uproot those. So we’re doing work every single day to set the conditions for the possibility of that alternate vision of a world without prisons, policing, and surveillance.”

Critics of prison abolition often ask, “Then what will happen to the murderers and rapists?” But as proponents of this project are quick to point out, the current system already fails to address that problem and consistently fails to provide opportunities for rehabilitation to those imprisoned within it. Restorative justice and transformative justice processes can offer additional answers and are an important part of the conversation, but some abolitionists prefer to look at the bigger picture. Instead of focusing on the hypothetical question of what should be done with the perpetrators of violent crimes, they ask how communities can address the underlying issues negatively impacting people’s lives and build a world in which people don’t feel driven to make bad decisions in desperate moments.

“When people tell me, ‘What are we going to do with all the rapists?’ I’m like, ‘What are we doing with them now?’” Kaba told Hayes. “They live everywhere. They’re in your community, they’re on TV being outed every single day.... You think that that system is doing a deterrent thing that it’s actually not doing.”

Gilmore, a renowned geography professor who has been involved in the prison-abolitionist cause for over three decades, sees it as a long game. Her long-term strategy has included advocating for public policy changes, halting states’ plans to build new prisons, and calling for them to close existing facilities. In her estimation, shared in a joint piece with formerly incarcerated writer and activist James Kilgore, “Everyone who says it’s unrealistic to demand more willfully ignores the fact that to use law enforcement, as the U.S. does, to manage the fallout from cutbacks in social services and the upward rush in income and wealth is breathtakingly expensive, while it cheapens human life.”

Part of that issue lies in cuts to the social safety net, specifically in the area of mental health care, and the gradual shift toward prisons functioning as mental health facilities. As Gilmore wrote, “Jail expansion has been chugging along largely because law enforcement continues to absorb social welfare work — mental and physical health, education, family unification. To imagine a world without prisons and jails is to imagine a world in which social welfare is a right, not a luxury.”

New York City’s ongoing No New Jails campaign is an example of prison-abolitionist organizing at work. In 2017, when the city announced that it would finally be closing the blighted Rikers Island jail complex after decades of pressure from activists, media, and human rights groups, the move was seen as a victory. But in October 2019, the New York City Council voted to allocate \$8 billion to build four new jails across four of the five boroughs. The decision was met with fierce opposition from local prison abolitionists, who had launched the No New Jails campaign in response to the initial 2018 announcement of the plan. The city line is that the new jails will be part of a shift toward a more “humane” version of its criminal justice system; abolitionists countered that there is no such thing as a “humane” prison. No New Jails was organized around the principle that “there is no need to build any more jails [in New York City], and that the billions of dollars budgeted for new jails should be redirected instead to community-based resources that will support permanent decarceration”; its members have kept up a presence at hearings and council meetings. That community resistance continues, but for now, Rikers has already begun moving people incarcerated in the institution’s Eric M. Taylor Center to different facilities, one of two jails the city plans to close by March 2020 as part of the larger plan to shut Rikers down.

The island jail is only one example (though, in the interest of full disclosure, it is a personal one for me — one of my close friends is currently incarcerated there). The number of prisons, detention centers, and jails — and those confined within them — continues to climb, and abolitionists continue to have their work cut out for them. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, as of 2019 the U.S. criminal justice system “holds almost 2.3 million people in 1,719 state prisons, 109 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, and 80 Indian Country jails, as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories.”

There is still so much work to be done to address the evils of the U.S. criminal justice system and liberate those who have suffered its abuses, but prison abolitionists are used to demanding the impossible — and will continue fighting tooth and nail until every cage is empty.

27 Dec - Statements on the passing of Robert Seth Hayes

The following are statements recently put out by the National Jericho and Certain Days Freedom For Political Prisoners Calendar collective. RIP to Robert Seth Hayes.

MORE:

December 27th - Jericho Movement

National Jericho joins with all its affiliates, comrades, friends, sisters and brothers to salute our beloved comrade, Robert Seth Hayes, and to send condolences to his family. In prayer we say: "Innallahi wa innallayhi raji'oon," from Allah we came and to Him we shall return. In our shared revolutionary consciousness we salute Seth by quoting Chairman Mao: "All men must die, but death can vary in its significance. The ancient Chinese writer Szuma Chien said, 'Though death befalls all men alike, it may be weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather.' To die for the people is weightier than Mount Tai, but to work for the fascists and die for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather." Seth's passing is weightier than Mount Tai! We are emboldened with the knowledge that legacy of the Black Panther Party and of our struggles to defend the human rights of all people will live through the life and death of Comrade Seth. We are at peace knowing that our unified efforts, campaigns and support for Seth made it possible for him to taste the relative freedom of minimum security (life outside of prison) and not die in prison. And so it must be for all of our comrades still inside!

Lest Robert Seth Hayes' death be in vain,
Fight to Free all Political Prisoners!!!

December 29th - Certain Days Collective

The Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar collective sends our deepest love and respect to Robert Seth Hayes, who passed away on December 21, 2019, and condolences to his family and all who loved him.

Seth was one of the founding members of the calendar project, and we were fortunate to correspond and visit with him for almost two decades, exchanging ideas and learning from each other. From his first involvement with the Black Panther Party in 1969 to his work with the Black Liberation Army to his years of contributions from prison, he had many experiences and lessons to explore. This inspiration is one of the great advantages of working in a group that includes members across borders and on both sides of the prison walls. As each year passed, we were struck by his unfailing commitment to his beliefs and his passion. He was very proud of the calendar and our work to bring the voices and visions of political prisoners to people around the world. He expressed a deep solidarity with freedom struggles everywhere, including First Nations peoples. We remember Seth as a wonderful storyteller, with so much love to give to his family and friends. He had the warmest smile and shared in our lives and journeys with great interest and excitement. He would absolutely light up around children and families. Without doubt, Seth's life was shortened by the callous and neglectful medical treatment he received at the hands of the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Many supporters fought for him to receive adequate care for his Hepatitis C and chronic diabetes. Even as he was facing these health challenges, he continued to

contribute to the calendar and other projects. After his release in 2018, it was a joy to spend more time with him and share meals, memories and jokes. Our time with him was much too short, but we cherish it. Seth, you will be greatly missed and we thank you for your lifetime dedicated to building a better world. We will continue to work toward freedom for all, the way you would have wanted.

27 Dec - Appeals court denies Sundiata Acoli's latest bid for parole

Sundiata has again been denied parole. The following is a corporate news article, so please read it critically.

MORE:

by Matt Gray (NJ.com)

A man convicted in the 1973 killing of a New Jersey State Police trooper should not receive parole anytime soon, an appellate panel has concluded.

Sundiata Acoli, now 82, was convicted along with Joanne Chesimard in the shooting death of Trooper Werner Foerster and wounding of Trooper James Harper during a traffic stop on the New Jersey Turnpike in East Brunswick.

A three-judge appellate panel affirmed the state parole board's denial of Acoli's latest bid for parole, with one judge dissenting.

Formerly known as Clark Edward Squire, Acoli was sentenced in 1974 to life plus 24 to 30 years in prison for his crimes. Chesimard escaped from prison in 1979 and fled to Cuba. She remains on the FBI's most wanted list.

Acoli was denied parole in 1994 and 2004, with the parole board citing "continued anti-social behavior" and continued denial of the evidence presented at his trial.

After a two-member parole board panel denied him again in 2010, Acoli appealed and the state appellate court ruled in 2014 that he was wrongly denied parole and ordered his release.

The state attorney general and parole board appealed that ruling to the state Supreme Court, which reversed the lower court ruling in 2016 and ordered that he receive a hearing before the full parole board.

While Acoli previously stated that he blacked out during the confrontation with the troopers because of a graze wound from a bullet and didn't remember how Foerster died, he speculated during this new hearing that another trooper "probably" shot Foerster with a "friendly fire shot."

Acoli and Chesimard were members of the Black Panthers and the militant Black Liberation Army at the time of the shooting.

Trooper James Harper stopped their car for a broken tail light just after midnight on May 2, 1973. Harper called Foerster for backup and Foerster discovered Acoli had a gun, according to previous reports.

During a gun battle, Chesimard shot and wounded Harper and Foerster was shot when Acoli's gun fired during a struggle between the men. The prosecution argued that Chesimard then took Foerster's gun and shot him twice in the head. The defense argued that Chesimard was too badly injured from her own gunshot wounds to have killed Foerster.

A third man in the car with Acoli and Chesimard, James Costan, was shot and killed at the scene.

In seeking parole, Acoli claimed he led a crime-free life for about 40 years and took "full responsibility" for Foerster's death. The parole board didn't buy it, though, calling it "disturbing" that he would raise the

friendly fire theory — which is not supported by ballistic evidence — while also claiming he took responsibility for the crime.

The parole board found there remained a "substantial likelihood" he would commit new crimes if released from prison. His bid for parole was denied and a 15-year period of parole ineligibility was set.

In reviewing his appeal of that decision, the appellate court ruled Friday that the parole board's decision was reasonable and supported by "substantial credible evidence."

Appellate Judge Garry S. Rothstadt, disagreed with his colleagues' decision. In a dissenting opinion, Rothstadt said Acoli had been a model prisoner for decades and that the parole denial included no evidence that he was likely to commit new crimes if released.

He said Acoli's new speculation about how Foerster was shot doesn't change the fact that he has expressed remorse for his part in the crime.

Acoli, one of the state's oldest and longest-serving inmates, is currently housed at a federal prison in Maryland.

29 Dec - Here Are Five Ways to Support Chelsea Manning in 2020

The year 2019 has been a nightmare for whistleblower Chelsea Manning and her supporters.

MORE:

by Ella Fassler (*Truthout*)

While Donald Trump cleared three members of the United States Army who reportedly murdered Afghani civilians, Manning is, once again, confined for acting in accord with her own principles. In 2010, she was imprisoned for leaking classified military and diplomatic documents that exposed U.S. war crimes, including the murder of Iraqi and Afghani civilians.

This time, Manning is not charged with or convicted of a crime. On March 6, 2019, she invoked her First, Fourth and Sixth Amendment protections as she refused to testify in federal grand jury proceedings in an investigation against WikiLeaks. District Court Judge Claude M. Hilton of the Eastern District of Virginia sanctioned Manning with contempt and ordered her detention at the Truesdale Adult Detention Facility in Alexandria, Virginia, for the 18-month life of the grand jury, or until she folds.

After the judge's order, Manning's support committee, Chelsea Resists, wrote in a support statement,

It is no secret that members of the current administration have openly expressed their hatred for Chelsea. Donald Trump himself has tweeted about his desire to undo Barack Obama's commutation and put Chelsea back in jail. We reject the logic that Chelsea should comply and answer questions regarding events for which she has already provided ample testimony, and we condemn the government's punitive efforts to back her into a corner.

On the books, grand juries exist to decide whether a suspect should be indicted with felony-level crimes. The reality is messier. The process — which has been abandoned by England and every other former member of the British Empire — is easily manipulated by the prosecution. The court proceedings operate in complete secrecy, without a judge or defense attorney present, and the jury is not screened for biases. As the saying goes, a grand jury "can indict a ham sandwich" (with the exception of police officers). With expansive subpoena power, the government can attempt to force any witness to testify and obtain any documents prosecutors and police want. Historically, the government has used the process to gather information, surveil and disrupt movements by creating paranoia and fear.

By resisting this grand jury, Manning follows in the footsteps of activists for Black liberation, Puerto Rican independence, a free Palestine, environmental liberation, animal liberation, and more. In Manning's own words:

This experience so far only proves my long-held belief that grand juries are simply outdated tools used by the federal government to harass and disrupt political opponents and activists in fishing expeditions.... The idea I hold the keys to my own cell is an absurd one, as I face the prospect of suffering either way due to this unnecessary and punitive subpoena: I can either go to jail or betray my principles. The latter exists as a much worse prison than the government can construct.

Legally, the government can hold people in contempt to coerce grand jury testimony, but not as punishment for refusing to testify. Anarchists, adamantly refusing to assist the state on ideological grounds, have helped set a precedent for the release of incoercible prisoners. Anarchist grand jury resister Jerry Koch was released through a “grumbles motion,” which argues for the court to review incarceration as punitive. The judge in Koch’s case wrote that “Because he continues to oppose the government in general and the grand jury process in particular, he urges that continued confinement will not induce him to testify ... the refusal to testify is somehow transmogrified from a lock to a key.”

Manning is represented by Koch’s former attorney, Moira Meltzer-Cohen. But, despite Manning’s similar opposition against the grand jury process in principle, Judge Hilton refused to grant Manning’s grumbles motion. Instead, in an unprecedented move in a grand jury context, another judge, District Court Judge Anthony Trenga, imposed a \$500 per day fine after 30 days and \$1,000 per day after 60 days of his order. As of December 23, Manning had been fined \$176,000.

Public support for grand jury resisters is crucial for increasing the odds that a person held in civil contempt will be released, according to several legal support groups. Here are five actions you can take to support Chelsea Manning.

1. Educate People About Manning’s Case and the Unjust Grand Jury Process

In November 2019, Manning wrote a statement to be read at the Seventh Annual Aaron Swartz Day event at the Internet Archive in San Francisco. She did not write about her prison conditions or her personal legal case. She wrote instead about the history of the grand jury process and why it should be abolished.

There are plenty of resources online that explain why people resist grand juries. Manning wrote a letter to Judge Trenga with a detailed explanation. Grand jury resister Katy Yow’s support website ncresiststhegrandjury.com/more-resources provides many useful explainers.

Supporters can educate themselves and bring these ideas out into the world by setting up tables with literature or organizing panels with local experts. People can post about grand juries on social media and send emails to friends and family.

2. Donate to and Share Manning’s Legal Fund

Manning’s legal fundraiser is raising money for legal fees, court transcripts and attorney travel fees. If you don’t personally have the funds to donate, consider sending the link to friends or family who might. actionnetwork.org/fundraising/chelsea-manning-needs-legal-funds-to-resist-a-grand-jury-subpoena

3. Write Letters, Organize a Letter-Writing Event

Supporters can send letters on white paper with pen, pencil or colored pencil.

If words aren’t flowing, drawing pictures is allowed.

Sending a letter to an incarcerated person is like writing anyone else. Supporters can share a bit of information about themselves and their life, and ask a couple of questions in return. Offer solidarity, not pity. Keep writing even if you don’t receive a response. Incarcerated people find ways to stay surprisingly busy, and Manning receives more letters than an average prisoner. Here’s a video curated by Burning Books about how to write to U.S. political prisoners: youtube.com/watch?v=nu-qpGOWsSg

Writing letters with friends and other locals is a good way to build solidarity and community in the face of state repression. To organize a letter-writing event, find a venue with several long tables, advertise with flyers, local newspapers and/or Facebook events, and gather pens and paper. Here is an example of a letter-writing dinner that was organized for Manning in Brooklyn, New York:
nycabc.wordpress.com/2019/03/27/chelsea2019

The Truesdale Adult Detention Center does not allow books, cards, packages, postcards or photocopies. However, incarcerated people may receive newspapers and can keep up to 10 4×6 non-polaroid photographs at a time. All mail is monitored and read by staff.

4. Sign a New Petition Demanding Manning’s Release

The “Free Chelsea Manning Now” petition, launched in December 2019, is gathering signatures and letters for delivery to Judge Trenga. Signing this petition is a quick and easy way to support Manning:
actionnetwork.org/petitions/sign-the-petition-free-chelsea-manning-now

5. Attend the New Year’s Eve Noise Demonstration at Truesdale Detention Center in Alexandria, Virginia!

In October 2019, Judge Trenga also sanctioned hacktivist Jeremy Hammond with contempt, presumably for the same grand jury as Manning. Hammond is currently being held in Alexandria Detention Center. On New Year’s Eve, Hammond’s support group is calling for a “noise demonstration” in solidarity with Hammond and Manning at the Truesdale Detention Center.

Noise demonstrations are gatherings held by supporters outside of jails and prisons to remind incarcerated people that they are not alone. People bring whistles, drums, bullhorns and sparklers, and bang on pots and pans to make as much noise as possible. Incarcerated people return the appreciation by flashing their cell lights on and off and waving.

Around this time last year, Manning was revamping her look for a new year. While she probably did not expect to be confined for her next New Year’s Eve, she may have anticipated some level of ongoing harassment. Harassment left unanswered will embolden authorities against Manning, and for all those who stand up against the current power structure. Flooding Manning’s mailbox, gathering outside of the jail, and other forms of support force the government to either push forward under a spotlight of harsh scrutiny, or to drop the increasingly burdensome case.

To paraphrase Manning, as supporters push for her release, “We got this.”

January 2nd - Chelsea Manning Spent Most of the Last Decade in Prison. The U.N. Says Her Latest Stint Is Tantamount to Torture.

by Natasha Lennard (*The Intercept*)

On New Year’s Eve, as personal reflections on the last decade flooded in, Chelsea Manning’s account tweeted that she had spent 77.76 percent of her time since 2009 in jail. That same day, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer publicly released a letter from late last year accusing the United States of submitting Manning to treatment that is tantamount to torture.

It does not take a U.N. expert to recognize the current conditions of Manning’s incarceration as a form of torture. It is the very definition of torture to submit a person to physical and mental suffering in an effort to force an action from them. Since May, Manning has been held in a Virginia jail for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury investigating WikiLeaks. Manning has not been charged with or convicted of a crime. And her imprisonment on the grounds of “civil contempt” is explicitly coercive: If she agrees to testify, she can walk free. If she continues to remain silent, she can be held for the 18-month duration of the grand jury or, as the U.N. official noted, “indefinitely with the subsequent establishment of successive grand juries.”

Each day she is caged, Manning is also fined \$1,000. If she is released at the end of the current grand jury, she will owe the state nearly \$500,000 — an unprecedented punishment for grand jury resistance. And Manning has made clear, she would “rather starve to death” than comply with the repressive grand jury system, a judicial black box historically deployed against social justice movements.

“Such deprivation of liberty does not constitute a circumscribed sanction for a specific offense, but an open-ended progressively severe measure of coercion,” Melzer, the U.N. special rapporteur, wrote of Manning’s treatment. Melzer’s November letter, which was made public this week, stated that Manning’s coercive imprisonment fulfills “all the constitutive elements of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” and “should be discontinued or abolished without delay.” The letter asks that the U.S. government provide factual and legal grounds for Manning’s ongoing imprisonment and fines, “especially after her categorical and persistent refusal to give testimony demonstrates the lack of their coercive effect.”

Manning’s supporters and legal team have long stressed that no such legal grounds exist. Manning has proven again and again that her grand jury resistance is unshakeable; the coercive grounds for imprisonment are thus undermined and her jailing is revealed to be purely punitive. Federal Judge Anthony Trenga, who ordered Manning’s torturous incarceration, should be compelled to release her as a point of law, regardless of U.N. censure. This is not to say, however, that coercive incarceration is defensible in cases where it works to compel testimony — it is not. Manning’s resistance has highlighted the brutality of the practice tout court.

Manning’s attorney, civil rights lawyer Moira Meltzer-Cohen, said that she hopes the U.N. official’s letter calls greater attention to the use of coercive detention generally, as well as the specific cruel treatment of her client. “While the United States has failed to live up to its human rights obligations, I remain hopeful that the government will reconsider its policies in light of the U.N.’s admonition,” Meltzer-Cohen said in a public statement. She also told me that the U.N. special rapporteur’s recognition of Manning’s refusal to be coerced can serve as further evidence to the judge.

In a statement from jail, Manning said, “I am thrilled to see the practice of coercive confinement called out for what it is: incompatible with international human rights standards.” The grand jury resister is, however, under no illusions about the U.S. government’s willingness to flout its purported human rights obligations in the face of admonitions from the international community. As she put it, “even knowing I am very likely to stay in jail for an even longer time, I’m never backing down.”

Indeed, as the U.N. special rapporteur noted, his predecessor wrote a number of appeals to the U.S. government from 2010 onwards regarding the cruel and torturous treatment to which Manning was subjected prior to and during her confinement in military prison. Yet her 35-year sentence was not commuted until 2017 by President Barack Obama. Manning noted in her New Year’s Eve tweet that she spent 11.05 percent of the last decade in solitary confinement and over half of her years behind bars “fighting for gender affirming care.” She attempted to take her own life twice during her time at the military prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Suffice it to say, U.N. appeals have never secured Manning’s liberty or safety. And as, Meltzer-Cohen noted in her statement on the U.N. official’s letter, “In the two months since the letter was conveyed to the United States, Ms. Manning has remained confined, and the daily fines imposed upon her have continued to accrue.”

If the letter fails to sway the government, it should, at the very least, serve as a public reminder to support a political prisoner. Though the last decade of Manning’s life has been marked by torture, she has responded with fierce resistance and struggle for liberatory social justice at every turn. In the tweet tabulating her last 10 years, Manning ended by noting that she devoted “0.00%” of her time “backing down.” The U.N. special rapporteur’s recognition of her refusal to be coerced is welcome. Our solidarity is more than deserved.

31 Dec - Noise Demonstrations Across North America Being Organized Outside of Detention Centers, Jails & Prisons

For years, anarchists, abolitionists, and autonomous anti-capitalists have marked New Year's Eve with noise demonstrations in an attempt to let those locked inside know that they are not alone and that there is a growing movement on the outside against prisons and the world that produces them.

MORE:

In recent years, the tactic of noise demonstrations has spread; from supporting the prison strikes, to fighting Biden's Crime Bill, to being used in larger struggles in support of ongoing prisoner revolt.

This year, its exciting to see the tactic of the noise demonstration spreading to outside of many ICE detention facilities, especially at a time when resistance to mass detention is needed now more than ever. We see these actions being organized by coalitions of autonomous, socialist, and Black Lives Matter organizations. Also, in Alexandria, Virginia, a noise demonstration is being organized outside of the prison caging political prisoners Jeremy Hammond and Chelsea Manning.

2019 has a landmark year in terms of supporting our comrades facing repression. From the end of the J20 trial, attacks on No More Deaths volunteers, antifascists across the country facing harsh prison sentences, the Vaughn 17 case, the Tucson 12 (who faced trumped up felony charges stemming from a noise demonstration), dealing with the intersections of far-Right conspiracy theories and "homeland security," organizing call-in campaigns to support prisoner struggles and demands – we've learned a lot this year. Let's work to turn these lessons into material solidarity and the strength to continue into the future.

As abolitionist ideas become more accepted and in some instances, even enter the mainstream and political dialog, let's continue to experiment and act; encouraging people to join us both in the joy of revolt and in the day to day organizing of autonomous projects.

The wrong ICE is melting, the wrong Amazon is burning!

Fire to the prisons! Free them all!

Happy New Year!

1 Jan - More Than 25 Cities Light Up the Night Against

On New Year's Eve, in over 25 cities across so-called North America, anarchists, abolitionists, and autonomous anti-capitalists took part in noise demonstrations outside of ICE detention facilities, jails, and prisons. Here's a roundup of all the action we could track down.

MORE:

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

For the 11th year in a row, anarchists and other rebels gathered on New Year's eve to march on the Barton Jail. This is an international tradition, rooted in showing our disgust for prisons and their world and our solidarity with all prisoners, and especially to remember anarchists facing repression.

So we circulated a text by the Operation Renata defendants in Trento, Italy that contains some important reminders: "We have seen the suffering of families, friends, and those who have lost their own children to the hands of the state, and we have also seen most people's silence and indifference, in spite of how much closer these tragedies are to us than we'd like to believe."

We also circulated postcards in support of the five people with charges for defending Pride in Hamilton from the far-Right this past summer: "Those who were targeted were not targeted only as queers or as Pride

attendees, but as anarchists and radicals, who are always opposed to the power of the state and who carry a vision of a world without cops, haters, or politicians.”

As usual, we set off a huge number of fireworks, threw paint bombs on the jail, and cheered and danced to the radical marching band, the Flamingo Mutiny Brigade while those on the inside banged on the windows and made as much noise as they could. The banner was great and was lit up with strings of lights run through the wind holes so the text was visible in the dark.

We marched earlier this year, so the prisoners had not yet been locked in their cells, and it was really fun to see them together reacting to the demo in groups, getting excited together. One innovation was the use of green laser pointers to try to mess with security cameras as we passed them. The group of about 40 people was almost wholly masked up, but it’s still good to reduce the effectiveness of those things.

The cops showed up at the end and as usual were pretty belligerent, but we mostly ignored them and shouted them down. Once there were a few cars and they seemed prepared to act, we left as a group through the Food Basics parking lot, chanting “ACAB, All Cops Are Bastards” and then filtered into the neighbourhood. No arrests.

The Barton Jail is a particularly vile place — filthy, overcrowded, violent, frequently deadly, it casts a long shadow of oppression and brutality over our neighbourhoods. Refusing to forget those locked up and acting consistently and visible against prison can be a way of breaking the isolation of prison and linking struggles inside and out.

Our hearts will pound against these walls until we all are free.

Alexandria, Virginia:

On New Year’s Eve 2019-2020, supporters of imprisoned grand jury resisters Jeremy Hammond and Chelsea Manning protested outside the Alexandria Detention Center. It has been confirmed that the noisemakers were heard and the protest seen from the inside. Protesters deployed fireworks, flares, and a laser in addition to noisemakers.

Sacramento, California:

It’s been a tough year for anarchists and anti-fascists in Sacramento, CA. From a year when a solidarity demo was attacked and threatened with a firearm, organizers have faced increased and escalated police repression, and members from the de-centralized Neo-Nazi terror cell “The Base” have begun organizing on local campuses, there have been plenty of reasons to be demoralized. However, none of these events could throw a wrench in Sacramento’s annual NYE Prison Solidarity Demo.

Around 7pm NYE, anti-fascists from Sacramento converged at a local park in downtown. The usual target is the most convenient one; The Sacramento I St Jail, referred to as “the largest form of public housing provided by the city of Sacramento.” In this towering symbol of colonial imperialism, 100 meters from the Downtown Plaza, hundreds of folks ripped from their community await trial, bail, or are lost in the system from months to years.

About 20 people met for the demo, carrying black flags on short poles and signs that read “FREE THEM ALL.” A 16-foot cloth banner read “HAPPY NEW YEARS EVE, ABOLISH ALL PRISONS” with the Iron Front symbol. In the middle of downtown, a low-banging drum beat began to roar over the noise of New Year’s Eve traffic as the demo left the park. On the march to the jail, the demo began a caroling of old Union hymns, from The Internationale to Ralph Chaplin’s “Solidarity Forever.”

Arriving at the jail, comrades decided with local prisoner advocates on the ideal plan of action. Stay off the jail property and across the street or they’ll declare a lock-down affecting holiday visitation rights; stay away from the west end of the building where the phones were, so as to not interrupt folks on the inside during their holiday phone calls. The goal was to bring holiday spirit and solidarity to the folks of our

community who face unjust persecution by the illegitimate State, and not make their lives more difficult by our presence. We couldn't have been successful without the valuable contributions, insight and wisdom of decarceration activists in our community.

Starting on the east side of the building, laser pointers, flashlights and projectors were pointed at the fogged glass windows of hallways, cells and recreational rooms. Pots were beaten with pans, lampposts with poles, drums continued to beat and the street began to chant: "Inside! Outside! Were' all on the same side!" and "You are not forgotten! You are not forgotten!" The silhouettes of folks on the inside could be seen waving, stacked on top of each other and banging against the glass. The street erupted with, "Free them all! Free them all!"

In roughly 10-12 minute intervals, the demo moved from the East to the South towers housing two major units. Folks inside were ecstatic. Along I Street itself, a clogged, three-lane, one-way, bystanders and drivers honked, revved their engines, and cheered. Folks still in their cells hailed the demo by flicking light switches in their cells.

Folks continued to the East end where road flares were deployed in the street. Activists began a chant that incorporated a dance with the silhouettes on the inside: "Turn it up!," hands pointed up, "Burn it down!," hands pointed down, "No more prisons in this town!" while making an "x" with your arms then spreading them into a "t."

To end the visit to each tower, those gathered led a countdown and screamed "Happy New Year!"

There's an important note about a solidarity demo, about its effectiveness and what role it plays in the greater movement. There has been a critique this year about how "a noise demo ain't gonna liberate incarcerated black and brown prisoners" and they are absolutely correct. An international call to solidarity doesn't mean folks are going to storm the gates, liberate the incarcerated, and free all prisoners. A solidarity demo is about acknowledging that an international struggle continues, that a wound to one is a wound to all, and about showing solidarity between those on the inside and outside. The critique urges folks to "Bailout a comrade for the new year, get them proper representation for the new year, or support the incarcerated families," and we absolutely agree that doing decarceration work is not a one-day process, but a full-time effort at combating forms of police repression in our community. However, it is important to honor those who we have lost in solidarity, and those locked inside, isolated, and deprived of contact from one year to the next. We couldn't agree more that it is not enough to be performative, and that we must show up daily to do the work of decarceration and abolition.

Still, we will never deny how strong a tool solidarity can be, and that showing up in front of a jail, camp or prison to celebrate with those inside fills us all with hope. So in 2020, from Sacramento, to Hong Kong to Egypt to Greece: Fire to the Prisons! Fuck the Police!

Nieuwersluis, Netherlands:

Last night we held a solidarity action at the women's prison in Nieuwersluis at midnight. In solidarity with all prisoners held by the state.

Contact could be made with people inside the prison. Then fireworks were lit.

Against all prisons and the world that needs them!

Baldwin, Michigan:

On New Year's Eve, Tuesday, December 31st, 2019, dozens of people from around the state of Michigan gathered outside the North Lake Correctional Facility in Baldwin to greet a new decade of resistance and to make sure that the immigrants imprisoned there know they are not alone.

North Lake is a prison recently reopened by the GEO Group, one of the largest and most notorious private detention firms in the country, to incarcerate undocumented immigrants who have been convicted of so-called federal crimes. Immigrant-only facilities like this one, run by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, are known as “shadow prisons” because of the secrecy and opacity with which they operate.

As of October 2019, North Lake is the only such prison in the entire Midwest. It’s hidden away in Lake County, a beautiful area where communities struggling with poverty deserve better than the GEO Group’s economic exploitation and incentivized cruelty. In its efforts to disguise the racist violence of the carceral system from which it profits, GEO (and those who echo its propaganda) will often claim that this facility is for “bad people,” that it has nothing to do with ICE and plays no part in the separation of immigrant families.

But not only do we know that immigration-related offenses such as unauthorized reentry have recently become the largest class of federal crime; we also offer our support to all imprisoned immigrants, whatever their stories are, because everyone deserves dignity and respect. We understand that GEO runs concentration camps at the border for ICE, and also that prisons of all kinds separate families every day and have done so for generations.

This is why we met outside North Lake at the dawn of a new year with music, chanting, and bright lights. We broadcast messages with the hope of making it easier for prisoners at North Lake to contact us, and we urge anyone who has any information on people incarcerated at North Lake to send us a message on Facebook or email us at NoDetentionCentersMI@gmail.com

We’ll keep coming back and keep organizing until North Lake is closed and the people held in shadow prisons are free.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida:

Food Not Bombs Ft. Lauderdale, Black Lives Matter Broward Alliance, Food Not Bombs Lake Worth, along with other supported groups did a solidarity noise demo action in front of the Broward county jail on New Year’s Eve.

Comrades gathered in front of the county jail building and made loud noises to show that we are in solidarity with those who are incarcerated. We could clearly see the disparity as the rich and wealthy were on one side driving fancy cars, getting drunk in pubs while poor and the oppressed were held in dark cells in jail (not far from the where the celebration was going on), isolated from the mainstream society.

The prisoners raised their fists, waved and some even banged on their window to show appreciation and solidarity. Broward Sheriff’s office was already aware of the event through social media so they had gathered their force around the same time comrades had gathered (they had even sent out a message on Facebook that they would like to talk to organizers before the action). People winded up the action around 1AM with playing the song, “Fuck the police,” through the megaphones.

Omaha, Nebraska:

This year’s prison demo at the Douglas County Correctional Center started off like many of the past 8 years here in Omaha. A small group of folks, a sound system and banner. But after 15 minutes more and more people started showing up. Bongo drums, road flares, pots, pans and at least one feral child screaming like they were going to bring the whole fucking judicial system down by themselves.

There was joy, there was rage, and a vibrancy that left us feeling a small sense of victory, which was bolstered by the rolling escort of half a dozen police cruisers for the 6 block walk away from the jail.

It’s always heartening to see prisoners on the inside banging on the windows, holding up signs, dancing with us. We are interested in ways to explore connecting with those same prisoners and/or their families in

the future. Maybe a giant sign with an address they can write to, or outreach to prison incarceration support networks.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

On NYE in Philly about 20 anarchists gathered for a march and noise demo at the Federal Detention Center Downtown. At the meet up, after an overview of what to expect, what was planned, and flyers of potential chants were handed out, we set off toward the prison.

Marching with a banner, we kept it tight and let people in the streets know what we were doing. We walked on the sidewalk until we realized we didn't need to. A federal building and indigo bike rental kiosk were tagged by the time we arrived at the prison. Once there, someone tagged 'Burn Prisons' on the FDC lolol! We lit off fireworks, smoke bombs, banged flags and pots and sang and shouted solidarity to the prisoners inside, and insults to the cops gathered around us. It was really cool this year to interact with those inside, to see them flashing lights and hear them banging on windows.

After 30-45 minutes we took our leave, throwing fliers in our wake. The cops, who had started gathering at the prison, followed us. We had planned for a group fare evasion at the subway as our exit, but with the police breathing down our necks we dispersed in the street instead. Eventually we lost the trails of the cops and made our ways home safely. Some of us even had a funny serendipitous group fare evasion with some strangers, who in seeing us not pay decided they wouldn't pay either! Yay for the spread of anarchy!

Compared to last year we feel a lot has improved. Whereas last year we were rushed out of our meetup by the appearance of a park cop, this time we had a chance to discuss the action together and share supplies. Security felt tighter also, people's outfits were secretive and no one was taking photos. Also this year we could really feel a shift in group morale. There was a lot more laughter and joy. We thought our chants were funnier and more on point (rather than empty flexes). Maybe most importantly we were able to see and be seen by the people locked up, we saw lights and silhouettes in the windows and could hear them clearing lulls in the noise.

The things we wish went different were: our speaker wasn't loud enough to play music, our dispersal was sloppy (we feel like it is always hard to predict dispersal/exits but could be worthwhile have multiple plans/multiple backup plans and discuss them in advance), and we could have took the streets a little harder. Overall though, we thought it went well.

We hope this report back is helpful in forming even better strategies in the future. It's cool to reflect on our strengths and weaknesses and make adjustments over the years.

Shout out to the anarchists who were busy wrecking the nazi supporting bar mill creek tavern on nye!

Quebec City, Quebec, Canada:

Around 7:00 p.m., a group of people gathered in the woods on the outskirts of the Quebec City Detention Center to display their support for those detained. The institution receives prisoners who are serving sentences of less than two years and defendants awaiting trial. The establishment can accommodate more than 710 male prisoners, it is the second largest provincial detention establishment in Quebec, after the Bordeaux Prison. The prison also has a female section which has 56 regular places. At the time of the night visit, about 15 prisoners were in the outer courtyard when fireworks and flares were lit, offering them a bright message of Happy New Year. Enthusiastic wishes and screams were exchanged on both sides before the security tried to control the situation. The action concluded without arrests.

Because we still live in a colonial and racist context where the First Peoples are incarcerated by the Canadian government in a disproportionate way compared to the rest of the population, we want to reaffirm our solidarity by denouncing the jurisdiction of "Canada" on these lands and his hand on life and determination of the people who live there.

We can no longer deny the impact of colonialism!

We salute the courage of Shanet Pilot, a native warrior, who is still incarcerated 3 hours a week in Quebec prison for defending her territory, the Nitassinan, and opposing hydro-Quebec hydroelectric development. Since 2012 that the Government made her pay her “debts” by imprisonment, when at this very moment, Hydro-Quebec only pays crumbs in return for the theft of her territory. SOLIDARITY WITH SHANET PILOT!

The practice of putting detainees in the “hole” in excessive ways is a recurrent practice, which happens here in the Quebec City detention center and which must be abolished, just like prisons. Rapper Souldia recounts his experience of the “hole” when he was 24: “I was taken to the hole for 21 days. It smells of leftover food from the day before, it smells of piss, it smells of shit. The walls are dirty. There’s dried blood, drool. In less than 10 days, you are delirious.”

Quebec prison has also received the “E” rating from Quebec’s infrastructure society, which means it has the lowest rating and is in very poor condition.

A class action is brought against the government of Quebec to denounce the prejudices lived by the prisoners in this prison. The request, which is led by Samuel Cozak, a former detainee, reveals a measure called the “campsite” where detainees must sleep on the floor in the cell of another incarcerated person, at less than 20 centimeters from a toilet. Cozak also denounces detainees’ malnutrition, unhealthy kitchens and the interventions of officers who are tainted by intimidation, the use of fear and excessive isolation. Also deplored that only one doctor is present per week to respond to the health problems of some 800 prisoners including mental health services.

Another class action is underway in connection with the suicide of Gaétan Laurion who was incarcerated in the infirmary area of the prison under increased surveillance after several attempts to kill himself. At the time of his death, the guard had worked 45 hours in the three preceding days and was sleeping at the surveillance post. The family claims compensation for negligence.

Prisons in Quebec are generally overcrowded, it is estimated that the occupancy rate at Quebec prison is 104%. This has had a major impact on the lives of those who have been criminalized, including the large transfers of detainees, the equivalent of a whole prison displaced every day in the province.

Finally, we would like to affirm our solidarity with trans people and the LGBTQIA2 community who experience all more discrimination in the gendered prison environment and who also face humiliation when the time comes to have to comply with strip searches. A network is in place and is developing more and more to support these people in prisons through written correspondence which serves to create links and even create certain security for these prisoners. We therefore invite you to contact the Prisoner Correspondance Project for more info.

AGAIN A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND SOLIDARITY!
THE FIST IN THE AIR BECAUSE WE ARE ALL BORN TO BE FREE!
NO PRISONS! NO STATES! NO QUEBEC! NO CANADA!

New York, New York:

2019 started strong as we welcomed home water protector Dion Ortiz. Throughout the year, we saw more comrades released (Janet, Janine, and Eddie Africa; Little Feather, Connor Stevens, and Nina Droz Franco). And yet, as more elders age behind the wall, we lost a true warrior, Tom Manning. To close the year, NYC ABC organized a noise demo outside of Manhattan’s Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in order to protest, celebrate, and let folks on the inside know they are not forgotten.

We got there a little after 8:30 and others were there waiting. We greeted old comrades and folks we’d yet to meet and by 9:00pm, a decent crowd had formed. The night was relatively warm by winter standards, but

comrades from the Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) showed up with tea and hot chocolate to make sure everyone's vocal cords stayed nice and toasty as we yelled and sang upward, into the steel and cement monolith that is MCC.

There were all manner of noise makers, most folks brought their own. Hell, we even had a makeshift drum corps to keep this noise demo moving.

And while folks were there to celebrate and reach through the walls, signs and banners also expressed the brimming rage of the crowd. A crew from The Base showed up with black flags and banners to make sure all inside knew there were anarchists organizing in solidarity with them.

The demo lasted a couple of hours, but not before folks broke out sparklers and fireworks. And not before a fair amount of cops came to observe. They didn't have riot gear or visible plasticuffs, so the threat was more in what a bunch of preposterous goons they are than in any potential for arrest.

We've been told before, by comrades who were once held in MCC, that the noise demos light up the whole place and get through to the prisoners. If you're thinking about organizing a noise demo in your town, do it.

Shortly before the crowd started to break up and head out, the following statement was read as a call and response, ensuring that our comrades inside could hear it:

To many it feels like we live in a time like no other with surveillance and repression at every turn but also resistance, rebellion, and open revolt. This is neither the new golden nor dark age, it is simply another moment in time where we can collectively force conflict with a fucked up system.

Every day there are revolts of varying scale, most of which you never hear about. For those captured in revolt we come together in protest and celebration. Through the din of revelry and rage we tie ourselves to those who suffer systematized white supremacy and war against the working class

Prison is a means of social control to be absolutely destroyed.

Here's to the total destruction of a prison-based society!

Tonight we bring with us the courage of Bill Dunne, the ferocity of Joe-Joe Bowen, the wisdom of Mutulu Shakur.

We remember in every act of rebellion against the state, our deceased comrades Tom Manning and Robert Seth Hayes your legacies will never be forgotten.

We hold in our hearts comrades soon to be or recently imprisoned—David Campbell, Joseph Dibee, Gage Halupowski, Chelsea Manning.

YOU. ARE NOT. ALONE.

Tumwater, Washington:

What better way to ring in the new year than running around on enemy turf and riling up captives? There was a NYE noise demo called for 8pm at the Thurston County Jail in Tumwater. A crew of around 20ish people assembled and went around back the work release building up on a hill that overlooks the smoking yards and windows into the buildings, as we rounded the corners people began shouting and banging on noise makers. There were a few people chilling in the yard who were both confused and excited to see people, but the guards came out quickly to be NYE killjoys of the highest order and close down the smoking yard.

Even with the yard closed down, people piled up to the windows to wave at us and we waved back. A few people lit off smoke bombs, some climbed up on the fences of the smoking yard to get a little closer to the captives, and after about 15-20 minutes we all made the decision to dip before the pigs seriously responded.

As we left only 2 TPD cars responded but they kept their distance. People safely got away, though some were followed for a minute.

Overall, a success on enemy turf. We unfortunately can only do a noise demo at the work release building because its the only section with a yard or windows to the outside, the main of Thurston County Jail only has small windows way high up that are all inward facing and “yards” the size of a bathroom that’s solidly walled off all around. The only way prisoners would know we were there is if we had big fireworks to launch over the jail or we were breaking them out. However, across the street is the youth jail which does have windows all around and it’s a shame we didn’t go to show some love to the kids – as far as I can remember we haven’t gone to the youth jail since the 2016 prison strike, as we left there we chanted ‘we’ll be back’ but we never went back and that needs to change.

As the criminal system slowly expands in Thurston County in response to a new wave of capital accumulation that expresses itself in gentrification and increasingly violent struggles around the existence of our houseless neighbors and friends, we hope more focus will be put on this little corner of Thurston County as there is an announced \$19 million jail expansion in the works as well as a new Thurston County Courthouse complex to process more people more quickly.

Let 2020 be the decade we take the offensive against the ever expanding tentacles of the carceral monster.

OLYMPIA

There were rumors going around in the form of wheatpaste around town of a party at the well – a site that represents the more intense manifestations of resistance to gentrification and violent reaction by the city and local businesses against houseless people to push their pacified and white washed (literally with the increase of violence against people of color these past few years – specifically black people) vision of Olympia. The call was for midnight on NYE, but by 11 homies with eyes on the well were saying that 4 pigs were already posted around the well. The general vibe was nothing is probably going to happen.

Midnight came and went and nothing happened. A small crew of maybe 10 of us shrugged and decided to walk around town, maybe something would happen somewhere else? But as we got down the street, our good sense was overridden by the mischievous spirit of NYE and we donned our masks and this small crew moved through the crowded bar area of 4th ave chanting “NO 2020 – FUCK THE POLICE.” The response from people around us was a lot of confusion but a lot of people yelling back “FUCK THE POLICE.” We rounded a corner and emptied the contents of a trashcan into the street and tossed a flare onto the rest of the trash in the can.

In an appropriate metaphor for the state of Olympia – a white yuppie who had their fun night disrupted by the bare minimum of disorder desperately tried to put the trash overflowing the street back into the garbage can (with the flare still going lol) but here’s the secret of Olympia, the trash ain’t going nowhere and its gonna overtake the city. Run while you still can.

We continued up the street and ran into a small group of NYE revelers who shared some sparklers with us and jumped around and danced in the street with us for a few minutes until the police showed up, at which point we dipped without incident.

It was nothing spectacular, but sometimes the small wins are what’s needed. Maybe this is just me, but I think people have been feeling lately that it’s impossible to do anything with the police around, yet with no plan and just pure impulse and improvisation we were able to have a little fun under the nose of the police while they were prepared for something. I think anarchists often forget our greatest strength is our ability to improvise and out-manuever the police. Sometimes trying to plan out for every detail will leave us paralyzed rather than empowered.

I also think that publicly promoting potentially conflictual events has fallen out of favor and to our detriment, so this felt like a breath of fresh air for sure. There’s a million things to worry about for sure –

from pigs to reactionaries – but ultimately we need to be constantly recognizing our force in a million different ways and opening it up for others to join us. My worry with keeping conflictual action on the DL is that it loses its ability (however slim it may or may not be) to spread socially and we end up an unintentional vanguard carrying our spectacular actions that people see as only something those people do. Every move comes with risks and sometimes we gotta take those risks if we want to win.

Portage, Wisconsin:

On New Year's Eve around 30 people gathered outside Columbia Correctional Institution for a noise demo in solidarity with the people who've been locked down since November 8 because Black prisoners beat up racist guards.

Demonstrators made a huge racket with pots and pans, drums, whistles, a conch shell, vuvuzelas, a megaphone and hand-held air-raid sirens. We held a large banner with glow-in-the-dark letters that read "Fire Warden Novak" and chanted the same. Also: "you are not forgotten / you are not alone / we are gonna fight / to bring you home!"

We were heard throughout the residences. People inside responded by shouting and banging on their windows. With the concrete walls and distance between the buildings and the fence it was hard to distinguish much of what was said, but at one point when local Portage police showed up to monitor the demonstration, someone inside the prison saw them and shouted: "Fuck the police!"

A few days later supporters received word from inside:

Oh new years day [people] was protesting in front of the CCI. I'm surprised it didn't make the news with all the racket they made, I could hear them from my cell and I'm on one of the furthest units from the parking lot.

Later on New Years Eve some people also set off hundreds of fireworks outside the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) in solidarity with the campaign to close that facility.

Conditions at Columbia Correctional have been horrific for months and Forum For Understanding Prisons (FFUP) has been working with multiple people within the facility to expose the racism, violence and retaliation since the lockdown started. Between October 22 and November 8 three racist, petty, loudly Trump-supporting guards got beat down in separate incidents by black men imprisoned at CCI.

In response, Warden Susan Novak and staff have engaged in a wide variety of retaliation, collective punishment and repression. On December 3rd, staff CCI killed Muhhamad (Larry) Bracey through medical neglect. Warden Novak is refusing to administer flu vaccinations, endangering many with compromised immune systems at this over-crowded prison. A man named ODell Miller went on hunger strike demanding that Warden Susan Novak be fired, and Columbia County Judge Todd Hepler authorized staff force feeding him for a year, sealing the record to cover his complicity in that torture.

1 Jan - Charges Dropped Against the #Tucson12, Arrested After Protest Outside Of Pima County Jail

Statement from the Tucson Anti-Repression Committee on charges being dropped against the #Tucson12.

MORE:

During the week of December 8th, the Arizona Superior Court granted a motion, filed by the prosecution, to dismiss felony riot charges against twelve individuals arrested following a protest outside of the Pima County Detention Center in August.

Law enforcement, who alleged that demonstrators set off fireworks outside the jail, did not issue dispersal orders or interact with the demonstrators during the protest. Instead, over a dozen Pima County Sheriff's Department officers used aerial surveillance to identify a group of people on the Santa Cruz River Park Trail nearly a mile from the detention complex and arrested all of them, as well as two bicyclists almost

two miles away. Those arrested were each charged with felony riot, which carries a two and a half year maximum penalty.

“These extreme charges for making noise on the sidewalk suggest that Sheriff [Mark] Napier and his officers are working to stifle protest at a time when abuses of the department are beginning to be more widely noticed,” said Brittany Johnson, a defendant. Just this year, two men – David Maxwell and Francisco Ruiz – were killed by Sheriff’s Department officers in the Pima County jail in what they referred to as “use-of-force encounters.” In September, Pima County Sheriff’s officers were caught on video brutally assaulting a teenager, who is a quadruple amputee, in a group home, and beat and arrested another teenager who was recording the abuse.

“After subjecting these twelve people to three months of uncertainty, court dates, and thousands of dollars of legal fees, we are relieved that the county has given up on the prosecution of this ridiculous case,” said Glen Frieden, a supporter, “But the horrors of incarceration and policing in Pima County continue unaddressed.”

The protest was a noise demonstration, which have long been used to show solidarity with those confined to jails and prisons—the music and rhythms allow incarcerated individuals, who often can’t see the protesters, to hear that they are present. “Demonstrations like this are a natural response to this country’s inhumane system of incarceration, which inflicts suffering especially on communities of color, as well as on all working class people, who frequently can’t afford bail and are held until their court dates,” Johnson added. According to Arizona law, trials can be scheduled up to 120 days, or four months, after an initial arrest.

This demonstration was not the first outside of the Pima County Detention Complex. In August 2018, protestors called for an end to collaboration between jail officials and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Sheriff Napier removed the ICE desk at the jail in October 2018, but jail employees and the Pima County Sheriff continue to actively collaborate with federal immigration officials.

“The Sheriff’s Department may be taking their cues from agencies around the country who are increasingly using riot charges as a way to quell dissent,” added Frieden, “But we are not deterred. As long as people are locked away in jails and prisons, others will stand up to let those inside know they are not forgotten.”

3 Jan - Update on Anarchist Prisoner Eric King

We have been unable to share a lot lately because of ongoing issues with the prison holding Eric King.

MORE:

We hope to be able to share lot more within the week but have a brief update Eric would like to send out.

Eric is being held since arriving at FCI Englewood indefinitely in segregation since arriving in August. The prison has yet to provide a reason for this detention. There is no disciplinary sanctions being served nor reason to continue to hold him in segregation.

He can not receive books. Letters need to be on white or lined paper. He can now receive newspapers and magazines. There has been a ton of mail held back and lost. He doesn’t have a lot of addresses anymore. If you haven’t heard from him, please write again. He really could use word from folks right now. Articles are amazing. So are PDFs of books, poetry, zines, et cetera.

Please be mindful that there is a security officer assigned to Eric reading everything that you send in. Englewood has already used alleged (as in doesn’t exist) mail to withhold visits. Please do not ask Eric about his case he cannot talk about it. Also know that he is being held in the same prison that an officer 2 years ago threatened his family (still employs). Tensions are high at the prison. Also anything sent also has the potential of ending up in his discovery as well, so please kept that in mind.

8 Jan - Felony Dismissed in “DNA” #NoDAPL Case Against Water Protector

The Water Protector Legal Collective is thrilled with the January 7th decision from a North Dakota judge to dismiss the felony conspiracy to commit criminal mischief charge against a #NoDAPL Water Protector.

MORE:

The evidence in this case consisted of DNA found on a cigarette butt. The DNA material was alleged to have fit the profile of Indigenous Water Protector Larry Malcolm

The state claims the butt was found in an area where alleged property destruction of construction equipment occurred.

Bruce Nestor, longtime movement lawyer based in Minneapolis, is representing Mr. Malcolm on behalf of WPLC. Nestor's deftly drafted and argued motion to dismiss (with its supporting memo) was allowed yesterday and put an end to the bogus conspiracy charge.

12 Jan - Beating Swords into Plowshares

On April 4, 2018, seven Catholic peace activists broke into a military base to protest nuclear weapons. What motivated them to do it?

MORE:

by Patrick O'Neill (*Outrider Post*)

I am one of seven Catholic pacifists awaiting sentencing in a Georgia federal court for three felonies and a misdemeanor. The charges stem from an April 4, 2018, protest we organized at Naval Station Kings Bay. Kings Bay is the Southeast home port of six of the Navy's Trident submarine fleet. We face the likelihood of one-to-three year prison sentences.

Our Catholic faith compelled us to come to St. Marys, GA on the 50th anniversary of Georgia-native Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination to warn the world about the dangers of Trident nuclear missiles.

After cutting a lock on a perimeter fence gate and entering the base, the seven of us split into three groups—Fr. Steve, Carmen and Elizabeth went to the "restricted area" where we believe WMDs are kept in underground bunkers. They cut a fence, entered the bunker area, and held anti-nuclear banners until they were arrested by U.S. Marines.

Martha and Clare went to the base's administrative headquarters building. They hung crime scene tape and an indictment of the base on the door. They poured blood, and spray painted the words, "May Love Disarm Us All" on the sidewalk.

Mark and I went to an area we call the "Nuclear Missile Shrine." It is a public memorial where the Navy has erected statues of D-5 and other missiles. We hammered on those statues in a symbolic expression of smashing idols. I also splashed blood on the base logo.

A major component of our action was also to promote the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We carried a copy of the treaty with us to the base. The United States and the eight other nations that possess nuclear weapons have refused to sign the treaty.

Acting on the words of the Biblical prophet Isaiah, we decided to "beat swords into plowshares." Our actions were a minor transgression of the law, yet we are facing long prison sentences. The court is protecting Trident, and leaving creation vulnerable to nuclear destruction.

It was our use of blood that was most unsettling to jurors. I told the jury what I see as the obvious truth. The blood makes real the purpose of Trident: omnicide. "I believe the blood was already there," I told the jurors. "I just made it more visible."

During our October trial, the judge asked the jury pool of 73 people if any of them held strong personal opinions—pro or con—about nuclear weapons. Not one person raised a hand. This reveals a tragic truth. Most people have come to accept the fact that all of us live in a world on 24/7, hair-trigger alert. The constant presence of nuclear weapons is now normal.

The risk of nuclear weapons being used, whether by accident, computer hacking or intentionally in a war, has become an "acceptable risk" for our world. We act as if the threat to use nuclear weapons is the only way to ensure peace for our children and grandchildren. This is madness.

25 Jan - Antifascist Prisoner Benefit for David Campbell

WHAT: Punk Show

WHEN: 8:00pm, Saturday, January 25th

WHERE: Congregation Beth Jacob Ohev Shalom—284 Rodney Street Brooklyn 11211

NOTE: this space is down a set of stairs, which has two banisters

COST: \$10-20 sliding scale

MORE:

David Campbell is currently serving a one-year sentence for his antifascist activism. We're here to show solidarity and raise funds for his post-release fund.

For more information on his case, see freedavidcampbell.com

Bands:

Marie Maree, Rat Henry, Church Clothes, (A)TRUTH, Mad Diesel, Ufo Dictator, Tower 7, DJ DRACULA
O

Activist Organizations and Vendors:

NY Anarchist Black Cross, Club A Kitchen, Brigada71, 1800 possessed, NY SRA, Tattood by Wombat, EastRev Records, Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC), Outlive Them NYC