



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for April 16th

30 Mar - Message from Joshua Williams

New writing from Josh Williams. Take time to write to him to engage with this piece. Below, there is also information on a petition to have Josh pardoned or his sentence commuted.

MORE:

by Joshua Williams (*Black Ink*)

It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and support one another. We have nothing to lose but our chains. —Assata Shakur

Today I say, let's lose these chains of having been victimized by the system. Let's lose the chains of oppression. Let's lose these chains of slavery.

Black people: I'm writing you today to say let's take our world back. Let's take our lives back. Let's show the world our true powers, because believe it or not the color of our skin is a weapon in the eyes of the police and in the eyes of white people who don't love us.

I believe we will stand again. We will rise again. Nothing will stop us from getting to where we are going. I say no more to police murdering our young black people. I say no more to voter suppression. I vow with my life that I will stand for my people till I leave this earth. I will stand for the voiceless. I will stand for my youth.

I say to you: stand with me. Let the police know they will not get away with murder and then go home at night to sleep well with their families, while these black mothers and fathers are left crying and burying their own children. I won't allow it. We won't allow it. Not any more.

I say to all the police, to all the pigs: this ends now. You will no longer step on us like we're dogs in the streets, because we stand up to you. We are no longer afraid of you. We are black kings and queens.

Black people: I'm saying we have power in numbers. We are winning and we will win. The question is, are you ready to fight? Are you ready to get justice? Are you ready to get freedom?

I might be in prison but I'm still in this fight. They might have taken me from the movement but they can't take the movement out of me. Brothers and sisters, I will be back soon. And to all of you who support me, I love you so much. Let's fight this fight together—if not for me, then for your own children and for black kids across these United States.

We lose too many of our black youth to the prison system, to the hands of murdering police. There are many black young people in prison, just like me. We say no more to overcrowded prisons. We say no more to mass incarceration.

Sisters, brothers: I love you. I will see you soon. Please share this with somebody you know. My name is Joshua Williams. I am a black king and a black revolutionary. Power to the people. Hands up, don't shoot.

March 30th - Petition For Josh Williams

petitions.moveon.org/sign/free-ferguson-activist

Pardon or commute Joshua Williams' sentence...to be delivered to Governor Mike Parson.

31 Mar - How to Support Chelsea Manning and Incarcerated Trans People on Transgender Day of Visibility + Updates

International Transgender Day of Visibility can serve as a reminder that LGBTQIA+ people are incarcerated at startlingly disproportionate rates. We also have a lot of legal updates on Chelsea below.

MORE:

by Marci Robin (*Allure*)

Every year, March 31 marks International Transgender Day of Visibility. It's a day to recognize and honor those who have the courage to live authentically in the face of continued discrimination and hostility toward the trans community. And this year, March 31 also marks Chelsea Manning's 23rd day, according to her supporters and CNN, in administrative segregation — also known as solitary confinement — after being jailed for refusing to testify in front of a grand jury regarding WikiLeaks.

This is Manning's second time being incarcerated over matters related to WikiLeaks, with the first time starting in 2010 and overlapping with her 2013 disclosure that she is transgender. That 35-year sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama, and she was released in January 2017. During that time in a men's prison — a cruel yet common experience for many transgender inmates —, Manning was put in solitary confinement over a suicide attempt for 14 days.

"That Manning is now in solitary confinement is devastating," Ana Valens writes for The Daily Dot. "She has been through so much, and she was finally getting the therapy and the real-life friendships she needed to recover. But the government took that all away from her."

As a result of what her supporters in the organization Chelsea Resists understandably see as inhuman treatment, they released a statement "condemn[ing] the solitary confinement that Chelsea Manning has been subjected to during her incarceration at William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center." The organization accepts donations to assist Manning on ychelsea.is and actionnetwork.org, and now, they're also helping to raise funds for Manning's defense by selling T-shirts, of which 50 percent of the proceeds will go to covering her legal fees.

Although she is in solitary confinement, Manning is not alone in her circumstances. A study by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law found that "sexual minorities are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates, and once incarcerated they are more likely to experience mistreatment" — and solitary confinement is widely considered a form of mistreatment. The UN's Mendez Report, cited extensively in the Chelsea Resists press release, notes that after 15 days, the psychological effects of isolation can become irreversibly damaging. In addition to showing your support for Chelsea Manning through Chelsea Resists, you can support other incarcerated members of the LGBTQIA+ community through a number of organizations:

National Center for Transgender Equality

The National Center for Transgender Equality keeps a Trans Legal Services Network Directory that serves as resources for trans people in need of everything from assistance changing their names to legal defense.

LGBT Books to Prisoners

LGBT Books to Prisoners sends books and other educational materials, free of charge, to incarcerated LGBTQ people across the U.S.

Tranzmission Prison Project

This North Carolina-based prison-abolition organization provides free literature and resources for incarcerated members of the LGBTQ community.

Black and Pink

This prison-abolition organization is working to meet the immediate needs of LGBTQ and HIV+ prisoners, create a newspaper of prisoner-generated content, facilitate penpal connections, post bail, support people through court proceedings, pay formerly incarcerated staff, and cover transportation costs for formerly incarcerated volunteers.

Prisoner Justice Project

A part of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, the Prisoner Justice Project "supports low income transgender people and transgender people of color involuntarily held in prison and jail obtain life-sustaining services" by providing a number of legal service, including assistance preparing for parole appearances, support around transfers and requests for alternate housing, and appeals of disciplinary solitary confinement.

April 2nd - Chelsea Manning's Attorneys Challenge Prolonged Solitary Confinement, Demand Her Release From Jail

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

Chelsea Manning remains in conditions of prolonged solitary confinement, and her attorneys argue she should be released from jail pending her appeal.

"Ms. Manning's conditions of confinement must either be modified so as not to constitute punishment or she must be released," Manning's attorneys declared. "Since the jail cannot turn back the clock on punishment that has already occurred, her confinement in adseg in excess of 15 days already constitutes an incurable due process violation. She must therefore be released."

On March 8, Manning was detained at the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center in Alexandria, Virginia. She was held in civil contempt by a district court because she refuses to answer questions before a federal grand jury investigating WikiLeaks.

The facility has kept Manning in "administrative segregation," which authorities claim is standard for "high-profile" individuals. It means Manning is confined to a cell for about 22 hours every day.

Manning's attorneys filed a motion [PDF] on April 1, where they raised "urgent" concerns about what they referred to as the "instant use of prolonged solitary confinement."

"Ms. Manning was kept in solitary confinement for nearly a year during her confinement at Quantico. As a result of studying her case, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez issued reports defining solitary confinement as tantamount to torture after it becomes 'prolonged,'" they recall. "On the basis of scientific research about irreversible changes in brain chemistry, he defined 'prolonged' as more than 15 days."

Manning's attorneys add, "While Manning objects on humanitarian grounds to anyone enduring such treatment, she recognizes that it is likely lawful for the jail to segregate people who are being subject to punishment."

However, they maintain the law for "recalcitrant witnesses" does not allow for "punishment" of Manning.

"Adseg, particularly after 15 days, definitionally constitutes punishment, regardless of the motive, policy, or practice surrounding it."

The motion for her release pending appeal challenges several additional aspects related to how Judge Claude Hilton handled proceedings.

The district court held a hearing on March 5 over Manning's motion to quash the grand jury subpoena and a contempt proceeding on March 8—two days after Manning refused to answer questions on March 6.

As her attorneys argue, Manning “raised grave concerns about whether the jail could accommodate her daily post-surgery medical needs. She reminded the court that the only legitimate purpose of civil confinement is coercion, and that such confinement may not be transformed into punishment without due process of law.”

“Counsel for Ms. Manning presented both the government and the court with documents and letters from Ms. Manning’s surgeon, her doctor, a medical expert in transgender health, and two of the world’s foremost experts on the risks faced by transgender prisoners,” according to her attorneys. “Judge Hilton received this packet of letters and set them aside. He did not read them prior to ruling. He did not even flip through them or unfasten them from the binder clip which they were secured.”

Hilton allegedly violated federal rules by not stating any reasons for refusing to grant her bail.

The government apparently did not dispute the claim that Manning is not a “flight risk.”

“Without explicitly ruling on the motion for bail, he ordered Ms. Manning to the custody of the Attorney General. He issued no written denial or justification.” He also issued no “verbal rationale for his denial of bail.”

Although Manning put forward her “good faith belief” that she was subject to electronic surveillance, Hilton never required the government to respond to these allegations.

“A grand jury witness is entitled to refuse to answer questions derived from the illegal interception of communications,” Manning’s attorneys assert.

During the contempt hearing held March 8, counsel for Ms. Manning renewed the issue of electronic surveillance, referring to Ms. Manning’s declaration and the arguments of March 5. The specific basis for the renewal was that at least one question seemed to contain an assumption about Ms. Manning’s motivations that had no basis in fact or any prior statement made by Ms. Manning. Therefore, counsel for Ms. Manning reminded the court that a witness in a contempt hearing is entitled to the information in the possession of the government that would support their claim to having just cause excusing their testimony.

But the district court denied the electronic surveillance motion and did not apparently consider the possibility that the government may have an obligation to disclose such surveillance to Manning.

Manning mentioned that both President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have expressed resentment toward President Barack Obama’s decision to commute her sentence.

She suggested the subpoena may be a “mechanism of exposure and harassment.”

Additionally, her attorneys considered the possibility that the government may be using the subpoena to prepare for a trial and that the testimony they want is testimony they could use to undermine her if she appeared as a defense witness.

Hilton did not comment on any of the allegations of potential grand jury abuse that were made by Manning’s attorneys.

The vast majority of proceedings surrounding the motion to quash the subpoena and contempt were held behind closed doors, which Manning’s attorneys say violated her Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights.

Only after Manning was found in civil contempt on March 8 did the court open the proceedings to the public.

As Manning's attorneys recall, "The courtroom was opened, the district court repeated its finding of contempt, allowed the parties brief argument as to sentencing, and ordered Ms. Manning into confinement."

"The brief opening of the courtroom for the conclusion of the sanction proceedings was inadequate and violated Ms. Manning's rights to due process and a public trial."

In the final days of March, Manning's attorneys requested the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals vacate Judge Hilton's finding of civil contempt. They made many of the same arguments they put forward in their motion demanding her release from jail.

April 2nd - AOC calls for Chelsea Manning's release: "Solitary confinement is torture"

by Rex Santus (*Vice*)

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is calling for the release of whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who's been in solitary confinement for 26 days after refusing to testify before a grand jury, according to her supporters.

On Tuesday, Ocasio-Cortez said Manning's current imprisonment was "torture" and that the former Army intelligence analyst should be released on bail. Ocasio-Cortez also asserted that the U.S. should ban extended solitary confinement.

Ocasio-Cortez is perhaps the most prominent American official to come forward in Manning's defense since she was jailed last month. Manning refused to comply with a grand jury subpoena regarding WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, whom the U.S. had secretly charged with an unknown offense last year.

Manning's support committee says she's been held in "administrative segregation" since March 8. She's expected to remain there for the duration of the grand jury, despite her legal team's repeated attempts to persuade a judge to release her.

"Chelsea can't be out of her cell while any other prisoners are out, so she cannot talk to other people, or visit the law library, and has no access to books or reading material. She has not been outside for 16 days. She is permitted to make phone calls and move about outside her cell between 1 and 3 a.m.," Manning's support committee said in a statement March 23.

The sheriff of the Alexandria, Virginia, facility where Manning is being held has denied that she's in solitary.

The grand jury subpoenaed Manning in early March, but she said she would not comply with its questioning because she had already answered everything she knew about her leaks to WikiLeaks at a 2013 court martial. But prosecutors say they have reason to believe Manning's 2013 testimony may have been inaccurate.

Manning and her lawyers say that the whistleblower has been the target of unlawful surveillance since her release in 2017.

"I will not comply with this, or any other grand jury," Manning said in a written statement in early March. "Imprisoning me for my refusal to answer questions only subjects me to additional punishment for my repeatedly stated ethical objections to the grand jury system."

As one of his final acts as president, Barack Obama commuted Manning's 35-year sentence after she had served just seven years. Manning was convicted on numerous espionage charges after she leaked a cache of military documents to WikiLeaks, including a video that showed a 2007 U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that killed dozens, in 2010. The attack also killed two Reuters journalists.

April 5th - Chelsea Manning, Jailed for Resisting Grand Jury, Released from Solitary Confinement

via *Democracy Now!*

In Northern Virginia, U.S. Army whistleblower Chelsea Manning has been released from solitary confinement after 28 days and moved into the general population of the Truesdale Detention Center. Manning has been imprisoned since March 8, after she refused to answer questions before a grand jury about her 2010 release to WikiLeaks of hundreds of thousands of State Department and Pentagon documents about the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. district judge in Virginia overseeing the case said Manning would remain in jail until either she agrees to testify or the grand jury concludes its work. This week, Manning drew the support of freshman New York Congressman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who tweeted, “Solitary confinement is torture. Chelsea is being tortured for whistleblowing, she should be released on bail, and we should ban extended solitary in the US.”

April 11th - Statement from Chelsea Manning’s Support Team Regarding Assange Indictment and Punitive Nature of Chelsea’s Continued Detention

via *Sparrow Media*

Today, Chelsea Manning’s legal team will file a reply brief in their appeal asking the Fourth Circuit to vacate District Court Judge Hilton’s March 8 finding of civil contempt. Ms. Manning, a staunch advocate for government transparency, asserted legal grounds for her refusal to participate in what she views as an assault on the free press. She remains in detention as a result of the contempt finding. The Assange indictment disclosed this morning strengthens their claims of grand jury abuse, say Manning’s attorneys.

“The indictment against Julian Assange unsealed today was obtained a year to the day before Chelsea appeared before the grand jury and refused to give testimony. The fact that this indictment has existed for over a year underscores what Chelsea’s legal team and Chelsea herself have been saying since she was first issued a subpoena to appear in front of a Federal Grand Jury in the Eastern District of Virginia — that compelling Chelsea to testify would have been duplicative of evidence already in the possession of the grand jury, and was not needed in order for US Attorneys to obtain an indictment of Mr. Assange. Grand Juries may not be used for the sole and dominant purpose of preparing for trial, including questioning potential trial witnesses. Since her testimony can no longer contribute to a grand jury investigation, Chelsea’s ongoing detention can no longer be seriously alleged to constitute an attempt to coerce her testimony. As continued detention would be purely punitive, we demand Chelsea be released.”

1 Apr - Judge in Mumia Abu-Jamal’s case blasts Krasner for trying to block latest appeal

The Pennsylvania judge in the Mumia Abu-Jamal case has issued an opinion blasting Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner for trying to block the world-famous death row inmate from having a chance to reargue his case in front of the state’s high court. As always, read corporate media with a critical eye.

MORE:

by Bobby Allyn (*The Philadelphia Tribune*)

In December, Common Pleas Judge Leon Tucker breathed new life into Abu-Jamal’s case by reinstating the former Black Panther’s appeal rights, citing new evidence that emerged during the appeal’s legal discovery allegedly showing that a former Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice who denied Abu-Jamal’s appeal was biased against him.

Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing a city police officer more than 30 years ago, and, during some of the appeals, Ron Castille was Philadelphia district attorney. Castille later became a state Supreme Court justice, then chief justice of the court, where he was among the judges who rejected Abu-Jamal’s final appeal in 2012.

The evidence that rejuvenated Abu-Jamal’s case is a 1990 letter Castille wrote to then-Gov. Bob Casey urging him to more quickly sign the execution warrants for death row inmates “to send a clear and dramatic message to all police killers that the death penalty in Pennsylvania actually means something.”

Tucker said since Abu-Jamal did not know about the letter at the time of his appeal, he could not point to it as justification for Castille to recuse himself. And so, Tucker said in his Friday opinion, Abu-Jamal deserves a new chance to make the case for his innocence to the state Supreme Court.

But lawyers in Krasner's office are fighting to prevent that from happening. In court filings, Krasner's assistants wrote that Castille was merely expressing his personal view in the letter to the governor, saying it did not affect his ability to be a fair judge during Abu-Jamal's appeals.

In a new opinion elaborating on the December ruling, Tucker doubled down on his rejection of Krasner's position.

"Our system of laws, rightfully so, endeavors to prevent even the appearance of bias," Tucker wrote, saying the letter to Casey creates "an unconstitutional appearance of bias and would lead a significant minority of the lay community to reasonably question Justice Castille's impartiality."

"He's basically making the very strong rebuttal to DA Krasner's statements that this is just an overly broad decision and also a rebuttal to the factual misrepresentations in the DA's recent filings," said Rachel Wolkenstein, former lawyer and longtime activist for Abu-Jamal.

State Supreme Court to decide

The decision is now up to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which is weighing whether to take Abu-Jamal's new appeal and potentially grant him a new trial.

Judith Ritter, Abu-Jamal's lawyer, said the judge elaborating on his former opinion "clarifies even more that Judge Tucker's decision is correct."

Krasner spokesman Ben Waxman said the office is "still evaluating the new opinion and have not made a decision yet on how to proceed."

But in filings, Krasner's office has maintained that Tucker's ruling is problematic since it could potentially require "any lead prosecutor who becomes a judge to recuse in every case that was pending in that person's office when the now-judge was the lead prosecutor."

In other words, Krasner's prosecutors say, defendants involved in cases from a judge's past career should not necessarily be barred from being heard in that judge's courtroom. Otherwise, scores in Philadelphia would have trouble finding an impartial judge.

But Tucker said pushing for Abu-Jamal to be executed, then ruling to dismiss his appeal was a clear conflict of interest.

"To have the former leader of the district attorney's office decide the outcome of a dispute involving that office which occurred during his tenure as district attorney gives the appearance of being fundamentally unfair, unjust and improper," Tucker wrote.

Earlier this year, prosecutors wrote to the court about six boxes linked to Mumia's case found in an out-of-the-way storage room. The surprise discovery set off much speculation, which was put to rest when Krasner shortly after said there was nothing new found in the boxes, mostly paperwork and legal filings. Still, how and when the boxes became separated from the rest of Abu-Jamal's case documents remain a mystery.

Abu Jamal, 64, who has cirrhosis of the liver and is receiving treatment for hepatitis C, has continued to write extensively from behind bars about race and mass incarceration.

The family of the officer Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing, Daniel Faulkner, has said that the new appeal is reopening old emotional wounds. During a court hearing late last year, Maureen Faulkner, the widow of the slain officer, had an emotional outburst and had to be escorted out of court.

2 Apr - Recovery Help For Veronza Bowers

We are passing on a letter from Veronza Bowers, #35316-136, to the administrators of the Federal Medical Facility in Butner, North Carolina. Please take a few minutes to call the facility and ask that Veronza be allowed to stay in the hospital for another month to finish his recovery.

MORE:

Hi everyone. The following is the text of the request i submitted to The Health Systems Administrator, Dr. Hall and my Ortho Physical Therapy Team. Since i can't cut and paste , i am retyping the entire text here.

First of all, I want to thank each of you and all supporting staff for the very good treatment and care I've received while here. I came here to be treated for Lymphoma. While being treated, I contracted pneumonia. Thankfully, both deadly diseases were successfully treated. My most recent CAT Scan indicated that there are no traces of cancer anywhere in my body.

Then I had a hip replacement surgery by Dr. Wheelless. Thanks to the therapy and advice from Commander Hall, my rehabilitation has been very good as well. Commander Hall asked me what my goals were upon completion of therapy. My goal was, and remains so, to be able to walk on my own two feet without the aid of a walker or a cane. At present, I still need the aid of my 4 wheel walker and cane. The reasons are because I still have a bit of pain and discomfiture in my trochanter which causes me to limp slightly so as not to aggravate the area of pain. I do understand, as Dr. Hall explained, that it might take up to a year or more to be completely rehabilitated. My point is I didn't submit to being operated on and to end up still limping.

As you all know, I've been in continuous Custody by the BOP for 46 + years now. I don't have any problems being placed in any prison in the country, This week I was informed that I will be moved from here to the ONE (a satellite FCI in this Complex). I have no problem with that either.

My problem is this : Here, there are a number of men who assist me with some things I'm not able to do on my own yet, viz., my cell partner helps me daily with putting on my compression stockings and massages my feet at night to help relieve some of the symptoms of neuropathy, etc.

I am requesting that I be allowed to remain here for at least one more month. By then, hopefully i won't need the aid of my walker and the cane.

I am thanking you in advance for any consideration you give to this request.

Here are the e-mail, phone, and fax numbers to help Veronza's recovery:

Email: BUH/ExecAssistant@bop.gov

Phone: 919.575.3900

Fax: 919.575.4801

2 Apr - Call for June 11th, 2019

June 11th: the international day of solidarity with Marius Mason and long-term anarchist prisoners. In the 15 years this tradition has been observed, June 11th has facilitated support and action inspired by imprisoned anarchists — from noise demonstrations outside of jails to letter-writing nights, from fundraisers to arson.

MORE:

Setting aside this day is one way of remembering anarchists who are serving long prison sentences, generating support for them, and inspiring solidarity actions.

Because social struggles phase in and out, this day is a way to make sure that our imprisoned comrades are not forgotten. Our lack of memory is partially a result of the techno-alienation of the larger culture we're

fighting against. But it's also a product of the dynamics of the anarchist space. People become burnt out and the cycle of forgetting continues.

June 11th is a way of combating that amnesia, of trying to sustain a long-term memory in the anarchist space. Not only does this generate support for anarchists locked in the state's prisons, it forces us to look back at what came before. Considering what previous generations did can both inspire us with ideas we've forgotten, and help us understand how our current practices came to be.

While those of us on the June 11th organizing crew focus on prisoners with long sentences, and sometimes point out how disproportionately long these sentences are based on the justice system's own sentencing norms, it is not because we are criticizing the government for being unfair. Rather than lobbying for fair sentencing, we seek the total destruction of all prisons: both as physical cages that kidnap people, and as a logic of social control that includes surveillance technologies, parole, and ankle monitors. While we support those who can finagle the state's own laws to get comrades released as early as possible, we're committed to those who are still waiting and those for whom this is not possible. We want to push the boundaries of what that commitment means. Our emphasis on long-term sentences is to make sure our comrades continue to receive support as time moves forward.

The person who has been the focus of June 11th the longest is Marius Mason. Marius is an anarchist, environmental and animal liberation activist who is currently serving a 22 year prison sentence. He plead guilty to taking part in an arson of a Michigan State University lab conducting GMO research for Monsanto in 1999, as well as twelve other acts of property destruction. Marius was imprisoned in 2009 during the Green Scare, a time when the U.S. federal government was cracking down on earth and animal liberation struggles. He was incarcerated in a high security unit until 2017 when, after constant advocacy by outside supporters, he was moved to general population. Finally, earlier this year Marius was moved from Carswell to Danbury, where he is much closer to many of his friends and family. In 2014, he came out publicly as transgender, using he/him pronouns, and eventually secured access to hormone treatment in 2016. For more information, check out the website his support team maintains.

4 Apr - Water Protector Dion Ortiz Released From Prison

Dion was RELEASED from Sandstone on April 3rd and is on his way home to New Mexico to serve the rest of his time at a halfway house.

MORE:

Please support Dion as he continues transitioning: paypal.me/dionortiz

Dion Ortiz is a 22 year old Water Protector from San Felipe Pueblo. He was targeted and charged with a federal felony for his actions protecting the water and fighting for indigenous sovereignty at Standing Rock. Dion took a non-cooperating plea on October 22, 2018 and served most of his prison sentence at FCI Sandstone in Minnesota, where Rattler continues to serve his sentence. They asked the youth to rise up, and Dion answered that call. Water is life.

Rattler has released a statement regarding Dion's release and their time spent together in prison:

"Dion is getting out of federal prison today. I have had the opportunity to serve time with him and help watch over him, but he also had friends that he made in here that helped him pass the time, guys his own age. He is a young warrior, and his people should be proud of how he took this time with his head high. He will leave here with his fist in the air proud of what he has done to help not only his people but all people that want a future for their children with Unci Maka. When his great grandchildren ask about the trees, it will be said that Dion fought for them. and when you take a drink of clean water remember this young man that stood up to oppression, that took the lies that the federal government threw at him, and still stood tall and proud representing the people of the Pueblo Nation. I am proud to know him and call him Akicita. I am proud to stand next to him."

Water Protector Little Feather (Michael Giron) is scheduled for release from USP Hazelton prison June 14, 2019 to Bureau of Prison (BOP) halfway house in Bismarck, North Dakota. The probation office denied

placing him closer to his family in New Mexico, refusing to interview his family members, conduct background checks on family he would be living with, and never inspected his home. BOP has intentionally placed him in hostile North Dakota, despite court filings, media, and personal accounts of water protectors, our families and legal teams continuing to be harassed by locals and North Dakota law enforcement while federal defendants had to live on house arrest waiting for trial, or when water protectors have court dates for state charges. We are still fighting to get him placement in North Dakota.

The official website for the NoDAPL Federal Defendant Support Committee will be up this month, and the radical art newsletter will be released in the coming months! Please write to our family making daily sacrifices in prison, and share their websites with others to advocate on their behalf.

8 Apr - IGD At a Crossroads: Help Us Continue Into the Next Four Years

This summer will mark the 4 year anniversary of anarchist media project It's Going Down's launch in 2015.

MORE:

While our listeners and readers have kept us afloat this long, by early 2019, IGD is at a crossroads. Either we triple the amount of people that donate monthly to this project by the end of the year, or by 2020, we will be forced to drastically scale back – or end – what we are doing, creating, and producing.

Right now, there are about 70 people who donate every month to It's Going Down and for this we are grateful. Our goal is to triple this to at least 200 by the end of the year. We know we can make this goal due to the degree in which IGD has become a community resource and a clearinghouse of movement news and infrastructure – because people literally tell us this everyday. We also know that the audience of our podcast is also growing with each episode; we're even streamed off of one of the largest radio stations in the Bay Area of California, KPFA.

We know that if this were to be IGD's last year, or if we were forced to seriously scale back the amount of content we produce, edit, promote, and record, then the movement as a whole would be at a loss. As hard as this is to imagine, if we continue to run into the red, then we physically will be left with no other choice. At this point in our project, we have to get to the point of growing, not constantly starting over.

There are three ways to help us:

SIGN UP TO DONATE MONTHLY: Help us reach our goal of 200 monthly supporters by the end of the year. Monthly donations can be as low as just \$2 and the average monthly donation is \$10-20:
itsgoingdown.org/product/recurring-donation

GIVE US A ONE TIME DONATION: If you are able to donate to IGD, please do. Your donation will help us continue and grow. Donate at itsgoingdown.org/product/one-time-donation

BUY FROM OUR ONLINE STORE: Our store is completely re-organized with new shirts, sticker packs, zine packs, books, and more! Check out the store at itsgoingdown.org/shop

We know the with the support of the tens of thousands of listeners and readers who use and interact with IGD weekly, we can reach our goal. We plan to be around for a long time and continue to grow and build beyond where we are now. Without our supporters backing us however, we won't be able to get there.

8 Apr - DHS Worried Black Protesters Would Join ISIS

As nationwide protests against police killings of black men began rolling across the country in 2014, federal and local law enforcement who were closely monitoring protesters' online activities repeatedly expressed a bizarre concern: that the mostly black activists demanding an end to police violence in the U.S. might join with Islamic fundamentalist groups promoting violence abroad.

MORE:

by Alice Speri (*The Intercept*)

That concern was unequivocally baseless, and no evidence ever emerged to substantiate it. Still, documents obtained by the government transparency group Property of the People, which were shared exclusively with *The Intercept*, reveal that officials with the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence exaggerated the significance of isolated social media activity, mostly by foreign accounts, advocating for a connection between the domestic movement against police brutality and foreign terrorism.

In intelligence reports and internal communications circulated around the time of the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, and the 2015 Baltimore protests following the death in custody of Freddie Gray, DHS officials fretted that the Islamic State might attempt “to use the situation in Ferguson as a recruitment tool” or call on “Baltimore rioters to join them.” And in July 2016, during nationwide protests against the police killings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, a cabinet position, circulated a memo warning that a lone, foreign pro-Al Qaeda Facebook user sought to seize on the protests to urge “‘Black’ Americans to take up arms” and “start armed war against the US government.”

A Fixation Born of Bias

These official warnings that U.S. activism against police violence might be exploited as a recruitment opportunity by violent foreign terrorist groups slightly preceded the FBI’s designation of a “Black Identity Extremist” domestic terrorism category, which essentially cast large numbers of the same black activists as potential homegrown violent extremists. As *The Intercept* has reported, the FBI’s “Black Identity Extremism” label, while first used in a 2017 threat assessment report, originated on the heels of the Ferguson protests, and the first individual the FBI designated as a “black identity extremist” was a young Ferguson protester the agency had entrapped. But just as there is no evidence that a “Black Identity Extremist” ideology actually exists, there is also no evidence that U.S. activists ever saw or in any way responded to sporadic social media calls to join foreign fundamentalist Islamic groups.

If anything, critics say, law enforcement’s fixation on that nonexistent connection is testimony to both their anti-black and anti-Muslim biases.

“They try to make it more scary, it’s like, ‘If we link Islam to it, and we link Muslims to it, then people will see this as a real threat, because nothing is scarier than Muslims,’” Umar Lee, a well-known St. Louis activist, who is Muslim, told *The Intercept*, referring to the movement for black lives that started in Ferguson. “Nothing is scarier than, ‘Hey, if the Muslims get together with these scary black dudes, then we got a real problem, so we need every resource available to stop this.’”

“They already have a massive amount of funding to do quote unquote counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, and all these other things that they do,” Lee noted, referring to well-funded domestic intelligence initiatives that have primarily targeted U.S. Muslims. “And they come up empty because the reality is that there are very few, hardly any people that are engaged in these activities.”

Civil rights advocates maintain that the documents’ message is both baseless and dangerous.

“Blackness and Muslim identity have been cast as threatening since America’s founding,” said Omar Farah, a senior staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights, which sued the FBI and DHS to obtain more information about its surveillance of black activists. “No surprise, then, that these documents reveal near obsessive fear of their intersection.”

“It’s inflammatory,” echoed Nusrat Choudhury, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s Racial Justice Program. “Just because members of foreign organizations are calling on domestic protesters to join their movements, that does not show those people in the United States are posing any threat of violence.”

The ACLU, which together with the Center for Media Justice also sued the FBI to obtain more information about the secretive “Black Identity Extremism” label, warned that casting individuals who express legitimate grievances as “extremists” risks exposing them to police harassment and stifling a movement that is badly needed. “There are long-standing, deep, structural, racial injustices in America, and people are allowed to call on this country to do better,” Choudhury said. “They’re allowed to do it under our Constitution, and frankly we need them to do it, because that is what has always led to racial justice in America.”

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence did not respond to a request for comment from *The Intercept*. DHS declined to comment on the record.

Fictional Connections to International Terrorism

The documents obtained via public records requests by Property of the People supplement similar documents previously made public by CCR and the racial justice group Color of Change. The earlier set of documents includes Islamophobic press coverage shared by DHS officials during the Baltimore protests, such as a Fox News story claiming that “Muslim groups seek to co-opt Ferguson protests” and an op-ed warning that the Islamic State, “which has stunned the world for its filmed beheadings and abuse of non-Muslims, is looking to capitalize on growing racial tension in the American city by claiming there is ‘no difference between black and white’ in their society.” It also includes an FBI situation report, issued less than two weeks into the Ferguson protests, warning that “ISIS supporters are urging Ferguson protestors to embrace radical Islam and engage in further violence. They are also reportedly telling any ISIS supporters in the US to travel to Ferguson.”

“Senior federal law enforcement assessing hysterical tabloids about ISIS co-opting the Ferguson protests is foolish,” said CCR’s Farah. “It would be comical if there weren’t dangerous implications for people of color and Muslims who speak out for justice only to be met with militarized police responses.”

The new set of documents, a selection of which *The Intercept* is publishing with this story, includes more internal assessments and emails exchanged by federal and law enforcement officials between 2014 and 2016.

In a partially redacted document marked for “DHS internal use only,” circulated days after a grand jury in Missouri declined to indict officer Darren Wilson for Brown’s killing, officials warned that “a purported fighter with the Islamic state, posted two images earlier today regarding Ferguson calling for the protesters to swear loyalty to the Islamic State.” The document also noted that the images were “making their rounds on English-language support accounts for the Islamic State,” though it made no mention of whether anyone affiliated with the Ferguson protests actually saw or responded to them.

In another redacted DHS intelligence document, released at the height of the 2015 Baltimore protests, officials warned that the account of a “presumed USPER,” a term used by intelligence officials to refer to U.S. citizens and residents, had called upon “‘indigenous peoples’ of the Americas and ‘Afro-Americans who are oppressed’ to attack ‘Anglo-American supremacists.’” The report continued: “There were multiple references to the riots in Ferguson, Missouri which was likely designed to resonate with an audience wider than [redacted name] has typically targeted. The messaging reflects [redacted name’s] awareness of recent US media coverage of perceived racial and other issues in American society, which the group is trying to exploit.” As in the earlier case, this assessment, too, offers no indication that anyone involved with the protests actually saw the posts.

In December 2015, in Minneapolis, following the police killing of Jamar Clark, DHS posted a report indicating that it was closely watching the social media accounts of a number of people, and noted that one user “expresses support for Islamic State” and another posted a photo revealing an “Islam Is Life” tattoo.

DHS again reported that a “US person posted a call for Islamic State support” in July 2016, days after the police killings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling.

Shortly after that, as the deaths of Castile and Sterling were followed by deadly attacks on police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued a warning based on the Facebook posts of a Bangladesh-based Al Qaeda supporter. The user called on black Americans to draw inspiration from Micah Johnson, who on July 7 had killed five police officers and injured several others at a protest against police brutality in Dallas. “Like the Dallas attacker in US, we appeal to the other negro Americans to jump into the agitation to realize their rights,” the user wrote, according to the intelligence memo. “Pick up arms, like this attacker, against the terrorist US Armed Forces. Fight for your rights.”

The reports quickly trickled down to local law enforcement and fusion centers across the country. In a July 2016 assessment by the Greater Cincinnati Fusion Center, for instance, officials preparing for an upcoming NAACP convention in that city warned that “FTOs such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, have encouraged HVEs to conduct attacks within the Homeland,” the memo noted, using acronyms for Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Homegrown Violent Extremists. “These groups use social media to inspire and urge violent extremists to attack targets in the Homeland, including mass gatherings such as the NAACP convention.”

That assessment listed a number of potential threats to the gathering and included references to a series of recent incidents of white supremacist violence specifically targeting African-Americans. But it also included much vaguer warnings that “ISIL” had recently “released an audio message urging its supporters to launch lone wolf attacks against military and civilian targets within the Homeland.” Theodore Sampson, a member of the fusion center and captain with the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office, wrote in a statement to *The Intercept* that the threat assessment, conducted in partnership with DHS, was “intended to support the security and public safety efforts of government agencies and private sector partners in identifying, deterring, preventing, and responding to potential threats during the convention” and that such “threat assessments are designed to look objectively at potential threats towards an event or venue without bias.”

“In 2016, foreign terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula had repeatedly called for homegrown violent extremists to conduct attack within the United States. This messaging was published in al-Qa’ida’s magazine *Inspire* and ISIL’s *Dabiq* publication and recordings sent out through the internet and radio. Additionally, these terrorist organizations and sympathizers utilized social media to encourage attacks within the Homeland,” Sampson wrote. “In this particular threat assessment, the reference to the audio message was to illustrate a recent example of the messaging encouraging lone wolf attacks towards mass gathering events and point out that homegrown violent extremist attacks were a persistent threat to mass gathering events.”

The NAACP, which last month requested that Congress hold hearings on domestic terrorism and “the ways in which Black activists are being tracked and monitored by government agencies,” could not immediately be reached for comment.

Absent from all these documents is any evidence that anyone associated with protests in the U.S. had responded to the exhortations of Islamic extremists — or that they had ever even seen those calls in the first place. Still, law enforcement’s close scrutiny of these isolated instances, even when none of them seem to have amounted to anything more substantial than social media posts, and the fact that these calls were prominently included in intelligence assessment reports, risked conflating, in the eyes of law enforcement, legitimate domestic protest with foreign terrorism.

Ryan Shapiro, Property of the People’s executive director, noted that government efforts to denigrate domestic critics by associating them with foreign enemies was an old and tested repressive tactic. “Since even before the FBI was named the FBI, U.S. intelligence agencies have preposterously targeted progressive dissent at home as tied to enemies abroad,” he told *The Intercept*. “Today’s obscene attempts to

link Black Lives Matter to ISIS and Al Qaeda stand on the shoulders of a century of similar efforts to tar American dissent, especially in struggles for racial justice, as fronts for enemy agents.”

Shapiro also noted that the documents showed a propensity by federal law enforcement to base their “open source” intelligence-gathering on the conspiracy theories of conservative news outlets, which officials uncritically circulated during the protests. In addition to Islamophobic coverage, DHS officials shared during the Ferguson and Baltimore protests, for instance, in July 2016 the Office of the Director of National Intelligence circulated news stories, by Fox News and the U.K. tabloid Daily Mail, about a photo posted on Facebook in the aftermath of the Dallas killings that showed “a man dressed in black slashing a uniformed officer’s throat with a knife as blood spills out of the cop’s neck.” By contrast, earlier that summer, DHS officials monitoring protests in Minneapolis had also shared a story by the liberal publication AlterNet revealing that a local police union leader who had called Black Lives Matter a “terrorist organization” had a history of racist attitudes and was connected to a “white power-linked” bike gang. In that case, however, the officer circulating the story added a comment: “This article sounds like a drummed up hit piece to me,” the officer wrote. “But it’s nonetheless interesting to see all the race-related drama in Minneapolis at the moment.”

“Homeland Security is basing terrorist intelligence assessments of Black Lives Matter on articles from Fox News and a British tabloid that literally warns of the great menace posed by Putin’s purported army of hypnotic, shapeshifting super squid,” said Shapiro, referring to DHS officials sharing a report about Islamic State members calling on black protesters to join them by the U.K.’s Daily Express, which also published a particularly outlandish story about the Russian president. “Meanwhile,” Shapiro added, “DHS and other U.S. agencies are contorting themselves to ignore clear evidence of the dire threat from the far right.”

Exposing Activists to Serious Risk

Federal officials weren’t the only ones seeking to associate domestic dissent to foreign terrorism. Starting in Ferguson, a number of elected and law enforcement officials across the country referred to protesters not only by using racist terms such as “thugs,” but also, increasingly, by calling them “terrorists,” a reference that the FBI’s “Black Identity Extremism” report only seemed to validate.

Indigenous and environmental rights activists involved in the Standing Rock protest movement were also repeatedly characterized as “terrorists.” As *The Intercept* reported, private security contractors hired by the oil company behind the Dakota Access pipeline referred to the peaceful protest movement born to oppose the pipeline as a “jihadist insurgency” — and routinely shared intelligence assessments with law enforcement that portrayed activists as dangerous threats.

At Standing Rock, as in Ferguson, those watching the growing protests also paid particular attention to displays of solidarity with Palestine, with private security in North Dakota, for instance, noting that “the presence of additional Palestinians in the camp, and the movement’s involvement with Islamic individuals is a dynamic that requires further examination.”

“To them, a Palestinian flag might as well be an ISIS flag,” said Lee, the Ferguson activist, referring to the baseless conflation of the Palestinian struggle with Islamic extremism.

“It wouldn’t shock me at all to see misinterpretation of symbols, conflation of different groups, of different racial and ethnic and political and religious backgrounds, under this vector of challenging a Muslim boogeyman,” echoed Choudhury. “It’s absurd.”

Choudhury, who for years has worked to expose an FBI “racial and ethnic mapping program,” noted that following the 9/11 attacks, the ACLU has obtained a number of intelligence documents that revealed the surveillance of Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian groups, premised on what she called a “totally unsubstantiated” recruitment threat from foreign Islamist groups. The ACLU, she added, also

exposed intelligence training material filled with racial stereotypes about people of Arab descent and Muslims, showing the agency's profound ignorance about the very people it was surveilling.

But while there was never any evidence that foreign extremists' isolated appeals to U.S. activists had any effect, critics said the mere suggestion exposed those activists to serious risk.

"That is the inevitable result of the creation of such a flawed intelligence product, that it inspires fear, and that it is going to lead to federal and state and local law enforcement's targeting of black activists based on nothing close to wrongdoing or violence," said Choudhury. "It's very dangerous, because it leads to this kind of targeting of human beings here in America, who are calling for equality and justice, just because there are other threats abroad."

Lee, the St. Louis activist, said that during the Ferguson protests, online trolls and conservative commentators especially targeted him and a couple of other Muslim activists with smear campaigns and racist and Islamophobic attacks, calling them terrorists and suggesting they were affiliated with Al Qaeda. One such smear, picked up widely by right-wing blogs, accused Lee of "threatening to behead critics."

"Some of those people were spreading rumors that I was in Ferguson recruiting for ISIS," Lee told *The Intercept*, noting that even some fellow protesters, when he once joined a protest right after leaving his mosque and while still wearing a thobe, commented "Here comes ISIS."

But Lee put the blame for smears and harassment campaigns squarely on government-sanctioned racism. He also pointed to the recent vilification of the black and Muslim Congressperson Ilhan Omar as another example of how ignorant and hate-filled campaigns are enabled by official discourse — whether by law enforcement and intelligence agencies or by lawmakers themselves. "It's institutionalized Islamophobia," Lee said. "It's institutionalized crusader mentality."

9 Apr - Washington Appeals Court: Evidence May Prove Climate Action Against Tar Sands Pipeline Was Necessary

A Washington state appeals court concluded a trial court violated the constitutional rights of climate activist Kenneth Ward, who engaged in civil disobedience against Kinder Morgan, when he was prohibited from presenting a necessity defense.

MORE:

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

"Ward's past successes in effectuating change through civil disobedience in conjunction with the proposed expert witnesses and testimony about Ward's beliefs were sufficient evidence to persuade a fair-minded, rational juror that Ward's beliefs were reasonable," according to the appeals court.

Such evidence should not have been excluded from his trial and deprived him of his right under the Sixth Amendment to rebut criminal allegations.

"I am very heartened that the appeals court recognized the validity of a necessity defense, in light of abundant evidence that the climate crisis is at a tipping point, and that our government is utterly ineffectual," Ward declared. "I look forward to putting the true facts of my case before a jury."

On October 11, 2016, Ward participated in a national day of action against the transportation of tar sands oil by pipeline from Canada to the United States. Ward cut off a padlock at a Kinder Morgan pipeline facility, closed a valve on the Trans-Mountain pipeline, and placed sunflowers on the valve.

Direct actions in North Dakota, Montana, and Minnesota involved valve-turning as well. The flow of tar sands oil from Canada into the U.S. was temporarily halted.

Ward was charged with burglary, criminal sabotage, and criminal trespass. The state of Washington filed a motion to block Ward from presenting evidence that what he did was covered by the necessity defense.

Two trials took place. One trial resulted in a hung jury. The state of Washington charged Ward again with burglary and criminal sabotage. Ward urged the trial court to reconsider the state's motion that blocked his ability to present evidence supporting a necessity defense. The trial court denied his motion, and he was found guilty of burglary and appealed the verdict.

The appeals court determined Ward submitted sufficient evidence for each element of the necessity defense, which means the trial court violated his constitutional rights.

In order to prove a necessity defense, a person must prove they "reasonably believed the commission of a crime was necessary to avoid or minimize harm." They also must prove the harm they sought to avoid was "greater than the harm resulting from the violation of the law."

Additionally, a person has to show the "threatened harm was not brought about by the defendant" and "no reasonable legal alternatives" existed for preventing the greater harm.

The appeals court maintained the question of whether Ward's beliefs were "reasonable" was a question for a jury. He did not "have to prove that the harm he sought to avoid or minimize was actually avoided or minimized." It was enough to show that he broke the law in an "attempt to avoid or minimize harm."

The decision from the appeals court went through each of the elements and considered all the pieces Ward planned to present in a manner most favorable to the accused. As the court outlined, he planned to show the harms of global climate change were greater than any harm that occurred when he broke in to Kinder Morgan's property.

His proof that direct action was necessary included examples of previous climate activism and evidence related to his work over the past 40 years on environmental issues, where the "majority of his efforts failed to achieve effective results."

Importantly, Ward's evidence did not solely constitute evidence that his protest was symbolic. He was not simply protesting climate change "as a whole." He recognized that what he was doing could help "alleviate" the "danger of Canadian tar sands oil" or the danger climate change posed to the state of Washington.

According to Ward, he contended that "Canadian tar sands is a uniquely potent contributor to climate change," and the "localized impacts of climate change on Washington" have the potential to be particularly "debilitating."

The decision highlighted more of the specifics Ward planned to present to a jury:

Ward argued that "tar sands oil represent[s] an elevated level of risk to global climate[,]" and that he felt he needed to act "in order to stop the advance of global warming, encompassing both current and projected warming in Washington state, ocean acidification, and impacts on local ecosystems and residents." Further, Ward argued that his "temporary shut-down of tar sands oil flowing through the Trans Mountain Pipeline certainly minimized the harm flowing from that quantum's contribution to climate change. . . and from the use of tar sands in particular." Ward also introduced exhibits about the danger that sea level rise poses to Washington.

"Based on the specific harms that Ward asserted he was trying to avoid, his actions were not merely symbolic," the appeals court determined. "The protester's intent was to physically stop the flow of Canadian tar sands oil into the United States. Because one of the specific harms Ward asserted was that Canadian tar sands oil is a particularly potent contributor to climate change, the protest was not a purely symbolic act. It was a direct way of preventing a uniquely potent contributor to climate change from entering the United States."

The Civil Liberties Defense Center, which represented Ward at trial and during his appeal, said the “state of Washington has 30 days to appeal the decision to the Washington Supreme Court.” A motion to reconsider can also be filed with the appeals court. If there is no appeal, a third jury trial will be scheduled.

The victory for Ward came as President Donald Trump prepares an executive order to speed up the approval process for oil and gas pipelines and make it harder for states to block such projects.

“This is a massive abuse of power that does nothing other than line the pockets of Trump’s fossil fuel billionaire friends, all at the expense of our democracy and our safety,” stated May Boeve, 350.org executive director. “Trump can try to rewrite regulations in favor of Big Oil, but he can’t stop people power and our movement.”

“We will continue to fiercely oppose dirty projects like Keystone XL through the U.S. heartlands, the Williams pipeline in New York, and many more across the country.”

Finally, state legislatures continue to pass laws to further criminalize direct actions by climate activists. South Dakota was the latest state to sign a package that will help officials crack down on pipeline protests. It was developed through consultation with Trans Canada and police officers.

The ACLU of South Dakota filed a lawsuit on March 28 to block one law in the package, the Riot Boosting Act, which the chapter says violates the First and Fourteenth Amendment.

The law “gives the state the authority to sue any individual or organization for ‘riot-boosting,’ or encouraging a protest where acts of violence occur. The law mirrors two existing state laws that criminalize similar speech,” the ACLU of South Dakota said. “Under the laws, individuals and organizations—regardless of their intent to incite violence, the likelihood that their speech or conduct would result in violence, or the imminence of the intended violence—could be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties.”

“Moreover, the laws do not clearly describe what conduct or speech is considered ‘riot-boosting’ or ‘encouraging’ a riot. The ACLU argues that such vague and broad language invites arbitrary enforcement, will chill protected speech, and will result in indiscriminate targeting of peaceful organizers.”

That states like South Dakota dismiss the threat of global climate change and move to protect energy companies from climate activism makes the appeals court decision in Washington even more crucial.

9 Apr - What Happened 2 Rap (Jamil Al-Amin)?

The unbelievable story of H. Rap Brown/Imam Jamil Al-Amin—an American civil rights icon wrongly accused and falsely imprisoned, is still fighting to escape the ghosts of J. Edgar Hoover's United States.

MORE:

Student. Coordinator. Chairman. Firebrand. Revolutionary. Linguist. Poet. Teacher. Reformer. Imam. Builder. Protector. Political Prisoner.

The original jury was never presented with the full story, including another man's confession to the crime. His supporters believe his conviction was the culmination of a decades - long federal vendetta targeting him for his activism and anti - establishment rhetoric.

As he sits imprisoned, his family and legal team continue the fight to clear his name and bring him home before the destructive effects of solitary confinement debilitate his mind and body.

After years of appeals and protests from us, his friends, family and supporters, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear oral arguments on May 3rd, 2019 in Atlanta, GA. This hearing will determine whether we receive a new trial and we would love to see you there.

While we are ecstatic for this win, we now need help. This is where you come in. We need allies such as yourself to assist not only with shining a spotlight on this opportunity for change, but also with the funding of this last push for freedom. Now is the best opportunity we have ever had. For more information on how to get involved please visit whathappened2rap.myshopify.com/pages/contact-us

WH2R? The Talking Points

We have compiled 15 of the most compelling talking points about this case. We have a right to be outraged. Were this any other man, he would be free.

- Agent Ron Campbell with the FBI was not originally assigned to this case. He however insisted he be apart of the arresting team and then subsequently insisted that he drive alone in his own vehicle instead of riding with the team he begged to be apart of.
- Agent Campbell is the only person who can establish complete chain of custody for the "evidence" in this case because he was the only agent present at both the crime scene and the arrest site who drove alone from one location to the other.
- Agent Campbell is also the only agent to get "separated" from the team once the search began. The location where Agent Campbell was separated happens to also be the location where the fingerprintless gun was found.
- Agent Campbell has a history of planting fingerprint-less guns at crime scenes. In the other instance, he planted the gun only after shooting the suspect in the back of the head so I guess we are lucky.
- Agent Campbell was also a key witness for the prosecution (yes it is ridiculous) and while being cross examined, he was caught lying under oath. Upon being caught, he admitted to being at the location where he is once again accused of planting evidence with no explanation as to why.
- Deputy Aldranon English, the surviving victim of the crime gave a vivid and detailed description of the shooter, "5'9 with cold grey eyes" were his primary descriptors. Mr. Al- Amin/Imam Jamil is 6'5 with brown eyes.
- Deputy English also reported shooting his shooter. Mr. Al-Amin/Imam Jamil was not shot.
- Bernadette Davy, the firearms examiner in this case, breached protocol when examining the evidence resulting in faulty results and analysis. She was later fired from the State for breaching protocol when examining evidence in her cases resulting in faulty results and analysis...Yes really...
- Mr. Al-Amin exercised his right not to testify at trial. Instead of honoring his wishes, The State conducted an impromptu mock cross examination of Mr. Al-Amin where they asked him questions and then hypothetically answered them for the jury during closing arguments.
- On appeal, The Courts agreed that Mr. Al-Amin's Constitutional Rights were violated by the mock cross examination, but the violation did not impact the outcome even after the jury conceded a primary reason for the guilty vote was the spotlight placed on him exercising those rights?
- There was and is no physical evidence linking Mr. Al-Amin to the crime.
- Otis Jackson committed the crime that Mr. Al-Amin is currently serving life in prison for. Jackson later confessed and signed an Affidavit only for it later to be dismissed and suppressed.
- Mr. Al-Amin was ordered not to speak to the media or public during his trial and has since been denied the opportunity to tell his story despite numerous requests from media and scholars alike.
- Mr. Al-Amin has served the majority of these last 18+ years in 23 hour solitary confinement for his "protection."
- Mr. Al-Amin was handed from state custody to federal custody with no notification, held without communication and locked up in numerous locations across the country away from his legal team, family and support system...with no federal charges.

9 Apr - FTP 2019 Convergence in Gainesville

The 2019 Fight Toxic Prisons Convergence is taking place June 14-17 in Gainesville, Florida and will include speakers, panels, workshops, protests and cultural activities exploring the intersections of anti-prison and environmental struggles.

MORE:

We are currently confirming venue, speakers, music and action plans for the conference and are excited to share updates with y'all in the coming months. We maintain a commitment to creating a space in which those most directly impacted are at the forefront of this conversation.

Check out the rabble rousing that followed our 2018 Convergence in Pittsburgh to get a sense of what to expect: fighttoxicprisons.wordpress.com/2018/06/11/prison-abolitionists-rally-for-human-and-environmental-health-at-pittsburgh-polluters-offices

You can register to attend at

docs.google.com/forms/d/1srKtpEQkAkBM80wmvkrUGFFsp7nutNllKt37zwziAtI

You can help us build hype via social media: facebook.com/events/671997813203505

Cost: The Convergence is always free, we just ask for a sliding scale donation (\$25 – \$50) to help us cover costs, primarily to provide assistance with transportation, food and housing to make the event broadly accessible. Folks who can donate more make it possible for people to attend who may otherwise not be able to. If you want to help fundraise for the Convergence, that would be amazing! We have a general fundraising page here.

Travel: The closest airport is the Gainesville Regional Airport, though tickets are often much less expensive into Jacksonville, Orlando or Tampa (all in 1 – 2 hour drive). There are also Greyhound, Megabus and Amtrak train routes. Please get in touch with us directly if you have any additional questions about travel and housing logistics which are not addressed in the registration form.

Background: Fight Toxic Prisons seeks to build momentum across, bridges between, and solidarity amongst the movements for ecological justice, environmental justice, and prison reform/abolition. Through our annual convergences we seek to create space at the intersections of various movements and across prison walls (at our 2018 convergence 9 prisoners called in to speak on panels and breakout groups), a space through which we can collectively explore how we might achieve liberation and justice. A space where we can directly share and learn from tactics, strategies, and experiences beyond the scope of our particular movements and campaigns that might play decisive roles in our local victories.

Why Gainesville: North Florida is home to some of the most repressive prisons in the country, with a steady stream of headlines about racist beatings, guards involved in KKK plots, censorship of critical books and magazines like *The New Jim Crow* and *Prison Legal News* (not to mention, mail from us!). There are over a dozen state and federal prisons within an hour of Alachua County, where Gainesville and the University of Florida is located. While Gainesville was once referred to as “the Berkeley of the South” for its student anti-war activism in the '60s and '70s, its actual name comes from a U.S. General who's claim to fame was in laying siege to a well-known community of escaped slaves which had occupied an abandoned military fort in the Panhandle. The city is also home to a campus still full of buildings named after administrators and politicians that opposed the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the integration of the school. Today UF has allowed this legacy of inequality to manifest in its contracts with prison slave labor working its agricultural research centers across the state. This modern slavery is also used by government agencies all over Florida. Prisons in the region are also full of environmental justice issues, from chronic problems with mold to neighboring mines and landfills (where prison slaves are used to literally process the free world's garbage). To top it off, prisoners face the worst of hurricane impacts, and

then are used in hurricane clean up efforts. They experience some of the worst water quality, then are forced to clean up dead fish from toxic red tide algae blooms...

The region is also home one of the most rebellious prison populations in the country, where public records have surfaced under-reported news about hundreds of work stoppages, hunger strikes and full-blown uprisings in Florida's state prisons. And solidarity demos in response have also been growing in numbers and boldness.

12 Apr - Bill Allowing 'Elder Parole' Consideration for Older Inmates Gains Momentum in NY

The legislation would allow the state parole board to consider granting parole to inmates over the age of 55 who have served at least 15 years in prison, but it would not mandate the release of those individuals.

MORE:

by Dan M. Clark (*New York Law Journal*)

A bill to allow so-called “elder parole” in New York gained momentum in the state Legislature this week when lawmakers on a key Senate committee voted to send it one step closer to a vote on the floor.

The legislation would allow the state parole board to consider granting parole to inmates over the age of 55 who have served at least 15 years in prison, but it would not mandate the release of those individuals.

It was approved earlier this week by the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction, which is chaired by State Sen. Luis Sepulveda, D-Bronx. There was no debate on the bill at the meeting, where Sepulveda and other Democrats hailed the bill as a money-saver for the state that would change the lives of aging parolees.

“This is, in terms of fiscal policy, a no-brainer,” Sepulveda said. “If you look at the recidivism rate of people over 55 that are released, it’s minuscule.”

The measure is sponsored by Assemblyman David Weprin, D-Queens, and State Sen. Brad Hoylman, D-Manhattan, who said that allowing those individuals to be eligible for parole would save the state money without endangering public safety. The parole board would have to assess the individual’s potential risk to society as part of its decision on their release, according to the legislation, though Hoylman said most affected by the bill would clear such a test.

“I think it’s a landmark bill that recognizes people who are aging behind bars should have the opportunity to seek parole because they’re dying in prison,” Hoylman said. “They have been shown not to be risks to the community and it is a huge burden to taxpayers.”

The legislation didn’t make it through committee last year because Republicans who controlled the State Senate at the time opposed the measure. It’s also moved this year in the Assembly, where’s it’s already passed the Correction Committee. That committee is chaired by Weprin, who said the bill would make New York the first state to enact so-called “elder parole.”

“New York needs to reform its outdated criminal justice statutes and become the first state in the nation to allow older incarcerated individuals the opportunity for consideration of parole,” Weprin said. “I applaud Senator Brad Hoylman for pushing this bill through the Senate Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction, where it has languished for more than a decade, and look forward to enacting Elder Parole in New York State.”

The bill will now be considered by the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Codes Committee before it goes to the floor of both chambers for a vote. It hasn’t yet been placed on the agenda of either committee, which won’t meet for a few weeks while lawmakers take a short break from Albany. They’re scheduled to return later this month.

The push behind the bill, on the advocacy side, has come from the Release Aging People in Prison campaign, which is led by Jose Saldana. The group has been advocating for the bill for several years with little success. This year its passage is more likely after Democrats secured a majority of both houses of the Legislature for the first time in nearly a decade.

“It would impact hundreds of elderly incarcerated men and women who are mentors and educators to countless people they’ve been incarcerated with,” Saldana said. “The bill offers hope and an opportunity for people to return to their families and home communities to continue to repair the harm they caused.”

RAPP is one of several criminal justice reform groups who have, in recent months, called on Gov. Andrew Cuomo to fully staff the state parole board. State law allows 19 commissioners on the board, but it’s currently operating with just 12. Defenders have also called for the board to be fully staffed, which can only be done through appointments by Cuomo.

“Too many people have been unjustly denied release because of understaffing,” said Anthony Posada, supervising attorney of the community justice unit at The Legal Aid Society. “This devastates their families and communities, creates a lack of due process in the system and requires immediate action.”

A spokesman for the governor said he was deliberately considering the appointments and that his pace of selecting individuals to sit on the parole board has not been unlike that of governors in the past.

“Governor Cuomo has filled vacancies on the Board of Parole at the same level and pace as previous governors have for the past several decades,” the spokesman said. “He has prioritized the appointment of individuals with a diverse range of professional expertise, such as mental health professionals, attorneys, psychologists and others with criminal justice experience. The Governor has also supported additional reforms to the parole system.”

Cuomo and lawmakers secured funding for a total of 17 parole board members in this year’s state budget, according to the spokesman, who said he would continue working with the Legislature to make this appointments throughout this year’s legislative session.

17 Apr - Anarchisms Otherwise

WHAT: Panel Discussion

WHEN: 7:00pm, Wednesday, April 17th

WHERE: Verso Books—20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn 11201

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join Saidiya Hartman, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Jayna Brown and Jack Halberstam for a panel discussion.

This panel addresses Anarchisms that exceed the container of normative descriptions of social upheaval, dissent, and social disorder. We draw from our individual and collective inquiry to include the riotous lives of Black girls in the early twentieth century, Anarcho-Indigenous feminisms in the Americas, Black utopic visions, and queer anarchy as ways to consider an archive of “Anarchisms Otherwise.” We explore permanent and impermanent sources of insurrection and radical potentiality.

23 Apr - Occult Features of Anarchism with Erica Lagalisie

WHAT: Book Launch

WHEN: 7:00pm, Tuesday, April 23rd

WHERE: Bluestockings—172 Allen Street, New York 10002

COST: FREE

MORE:

In *Occult Features of Anarchism: With Attention to the Conspiracy of Kings and the Conspiracy of the Peoples*, Erica Lagalisette sets straight the history of the Left, illustrating the actual relationship between modern revolutionism, occult philosophy, and the clandestine fraternity: Questions of class respectability may lead Leftists to ignore “conspiracy theory”, yet in doing so neo-fascist theories of history gain ground. Inspired by research within today’s anarchist movements, Lagalisette’s latest work also serves to challenge contemporary anarchist “atheism”, which poses practical challenges for coalition politics in the 21st century. Finally, by studying the history of anarchism, Lagalisette also shows how the development of Leftist theory and practice within clandestine masculine “public” spheres continues to inform 21st century anarchist understandings of the ‘political’, in which men’s oppression by the state becomes the prototype for power in general.

26 Apr - Punk Rock Karaoke for Books Through Bars

WHAT: Fund Raiser

WHEN: 8:00pm, Friday, April 26th

WHERE: Bushwick Public House—1288 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn 11221

COST: \$10

MORE:

Excited to be teaming up with Wisteria NYC and bringing PRK to the Bushwick Public House for the first time! Also excited to be supporting the fine folks at NYC Books through Bars and the awesome work they do. Come sing some songs and support good stuff. Win/Win.

About the beneficiary: NYC Books through Bars is an all-volunteer-run group that sends free, donated books to incarcerated people in NYC and across the nation. More at booksthroughbarsnyc.org

26 Apr - Dance Party Fundraiser For Ramsey Orta

WHAT: Party

WHEN: 9:00pm, Friday, April 26th

WHERE: Starr Bar—214 Starr Street, Brooklyn 11237

COST: \$5-20, sliding scale; no one turned away due to lack of funds

MORE:

Ramsey Orta filmed the murder of Eric Garner by the NYPD. The police have tormented him ever since. After a campaign of targeted harassment, the NYPD eventually managed to incarcerate him, and he remains in custody still to this day. We at RAM-NYC have organized this fundraiser dance party to support Ramsey Orta’s commissary fund as he finishes his prison term. Join us and Dj Roger Smith at Starr Bar!

Learn more about Ramsey’s situation at theverge.com/2019/3/13/18253848/eric-garner-footage-ramsey-orta-police-brutality-killing-safety

28 Apr - May Day in the Park 2019

WHAT: Socializing

WHEN: 1:00pm, Sunday, April 28th

WHERE: Tompkins Square Park—500 East 9th Street, New York 10014

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join radicals and anti-fascists from across the city for a fun, sunny day of free food, talks, games, crafts, sunbathing, zine-reading, face-painting, daydreaming, hand-holding and more as we celebrate May Day, community, radical life and the dream of a world where we can one day enjoy the commons every day! This year we will have childcare accommodations.

28 Apr - Lenny Foster: Native American Issues and Leonard Peltier

WHAT: Discussion

WHEN: 2:00pm, Sunday, April 28th

WHERE: The People's Forum—320 West 37th Street, New York 10018

COST: FREE

MORE:

Lenny Foster of the Diné Nation is the former Director of the Navajo Nation Corrections Project and the Spiritual Advisor for more than 2,000 Native American inmates in ninety-six state and federal prisons in the Western U.S. He has co-authored legislation in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado allowing Native American spiritual and religious practice in prison and resulting in significant reductions in prison returns.

He is a board member of the International Indian Treaty Council, a sun dancer and member of the Native American Church. He has been with the American Indian Movement since 1969 and has participated in actions including Alcatraz, Black Mesa, the Trail of Broken Treaties, Wounded Knee 1973, the Menominee Monastery Occupation, Shiprock Fairchild Occupation, the Longest Walk and the Big Mountain land struggle. Lenny Foster has received many accolades and honors for his groundbreaking work with Indigenous prisoners' human rights and has testified many times at the United Nations on both Indigenous issues and Political Prisoner Leonard Peltier.

Co-sponsored by NYC ABC

28 Apr - Anarchists Care About Books (ACAB): Caliban and the Witch

WHAT: Book club

WHEN: 4:00pm, Sunday, April 28th

WHERE: Bluestockings—172 Allen Street, New York 10002

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join us to discuss *Caliban and the Witch* by Silvia Federici.

MACC events are open to all anarchists, antifascists, anti-authoritarians and those interested in anarchist ideas and organizing.

Bluestockings is wheelchair accessible, with no steps or platforms, and wide aisles between shelves. The bathroom is not wheelchair accessible. There is a Starbucks two short blocks down the street with an accessible bathroom (at Allen and Delancey). Metered street parking is available in the blocks surrounding Bluestockings. Bluestockings is not a scent-free space, but we encourage visitors to please refrain from wearing perfumes, colognes or other scented products (including essential oils) and smoke far away from the entrance to the space.