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Updates for March 17th

23 Feb - NYC Anarchist Black Cross U.S. Political Prisoner/Prisoner of War Listing

For the U.S. Political Prisoner and Prisoner of War Listing published by NYC Anarchist Black Cross, Gianluca Costantini created a series of drawings that transform a document into a field of presence.

MORE:

What might otherwise remain a list of names, numbers, and prison addresses becomes, through his work, a constellation of faces.

Costantini's drawings do not simply illustrate; they restore visibility. In a system designed to reduce people to identification numbers and case files, portraiture becomes an act of resistance. Each line insists on individuality. Each face interrupts the bureaucratic language of incarceration.

The guide itself functions as a tool of solidarity — providing biographies, contact information, and political context for prisoners held in U.S. prisons. Within this framework, Costantini's images operate as visual anchors. They slow the reader down. They ask for attention. They refuse erasure.

His visual language is spare but deliberate: minimal lines, direct gazes, an economy of gesture. The portraits are not sentimental, nor are they heroic in a conventional sense. Instead, they convey endurance. They hold tension between vulnerability and defiance. The faces are neither mythologized nor anonymized — they are human.

By contributing to this listing, Costantini extends a long-standing practice of using drawing as a form of political witness. His work has often centered journalists, activists, and dissidents subjected to repression. Here, the act of drawing becomes a bridge between those inside prison walls & communities outside them.

In the context of the NYC Anarchist Black Cross publication, the drawings serve a dual function: memory and mobilization. They affirm that these prisoners are not abstract cases, but participants in ongoing political struggles. They remind us that solidarity is not only spoken or written — it can also be drawn.

Through these images, the listing becomes more than an informational resource. It becomes a visual archive of resistance.

2 Mar - Prairieland Defendants Update

*The big news is that the federal trial has concluded and the jury found most of the defendants guilty of most of the crimes with which they were being charged. This is terrible news, but not surprising given how rigged this trial was from the beginning. **NOTE: We recognize that we are including a LOT of news coverage, but feel it's justified given the potential impact of this trial and its outcome.***

MORE:

The first week of trial against nine defendants in the widely watched federal Prairieland ICE Detention Center case continued to expose the contradictions and weaknesses in the government's arguments, as well as unconstitutional conduct by police. Despite claiming the July 4 protest was an ambush, police witnesses testified last week that little damage was done to the facility and the Detention Center staff was largely ignored. Moreover, the responding officer Lt. Thomas Gross admitted that he drew his firearm and aimed it at an unarmed protester while they ran away.

Prairieland Detention Center officer Dekeithan Reedy contradicted his written statement, claiming on the stand that he had never seen his sworn statement and had no idea who had written it. One of the arresting officers admitted to conducting an illegal search of defendants at the scene, while other prosecution witnesses revealed that procedures for evidence preservation were violated or ignored multiple times.

The federal Prairieland trial will continue on Tuesday, March 3, when it is expected that the government will try to prove how a printing press, zines and First Amendment material is evidence of terrorism. The prosecution will also call to the stand an antifa “expert” and up to four co-operating witnesses who previously pleaded guilty. The prosecution is expected to rest their case by Friday.

“I’ve known in my heart this whole time that the defendants were not guilty of what the government is accusing them of, but I’m heartened to see just how weak the government’s case is,” said Lydia Koza, the wife of defendant Autumn Hill. “This trial is clearly a political stunt meant to criminalize dissent and nothing makes that clearer than the government’s lack of evidence for its fantastical claims.”

The nine defendants, Savanna Batten, Zachary Evetts, Autumn Hill, Meagan Morris, Maricela Rueda, Daniel “Des” Rolando Sanchez Estrada, Benjamin “Champagne” Song, Elizabeth Soto, and Ines Soto were indicted in November on a variety of charges including riot, discharging a firearm, attempted murder, material support for terrorism, and conspiracy to conceal documents, all stemming from a noise demonstration in support of immigrant detainees being held at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas.

The Alvarado police officer, who was injured at the scene on July 4, and who is at the center of the government’s case, testified that he almost immediately drew his gun upon arrival without any obvious threat. The officer, Lt. Thomas Gross, told the jury that he pointed his firearm at a fleeing person’s back before shots were fired. The government has also failed to provide any medical records for the injury Lt. Gross allegedly sustained. A later witness, Texas Ranger Billy Hill claimed on the stand that he believed it may be acceptable for a police officer to shoot an unarmed person in the back while they run away.

Body cam footage shows defendants Batten, Liz and Ines Soto, Rueda, and Sikes walking slowly and calmly away from the facility. Officer Darius Bell was shown stopping these defendants and, when they complied with police instructions while asserting their rights against illegal search and seizure by stating, “I do not consent to a search,” then Bell drew his weapon and police began yelling at the defendants who were seated on the ground. Police then proceeded to search their backpacks in violation of their Fourth Amendment rights.

The prosecution did not provide any evidence of a coordinated attack. They claimed all the defendants were wearing black clothes and tactical gear. However, video evidence and witness testimony showed many defendants were wearing colored clothing, including blue jeans, different colored shirts, and a tank top. In one humorous moment, the prosecution displayed an image of defendant clothing they described as tactical, which included two pairs of black thong underwear.

Moreover, the prosecution also described a scene with people spread over a wide area without an obvious intent to directly engage the facility or officers on the scene. The fireworks were mostly shot into the air and caused no damage to the facility. Detention Center staff who initially approached those on the scene were ignored, and at the time of the alleged shooting, at least five of the defendants were several hundred yards away, seemingly walking to their cars. One defendant, Autumn Hill, was claimed by her attorneys to have left early with the implications that she felt that the intent to show solidarity with the detainees had been successfully accomplished.

The prosecution’s case was further weakened on Friday when evidence was introduced against Daniel Sanchez Estrada and his wife, Maricela Rueda, who are both charged with conspiracy to conceal documents. Government witnesses cherry picked moments from jail phone calls between the couple and attempted to claim that words like “community” and statements like, “we are working on finding lawyers,”

were evidence of a criminal network. In a stunning display of incompetence, FBI agent Ulises Avalos struggled with basic Spanish phrases used by Rueda, despite being tasked with translating phone calls and portraying himself as bilingual during cross examination.

Late on Friday, when it was clear the prosecution was struggling to make a compelling case, the Assistant US Attorney filed a motion and brief asking US District Court Judge Mark Pittman to bar the defense from advancing a legal argument that the alleged shooting may have been an act of self-defense, or defense of another. Citing case precedent stemming from the 1993 standoff in Waco, Texas between federal agents and the Branch Davidians, the government is requesting that the jury not be permitted to consider such a defense argument.

“This is yet another questionable move by federal prosecutors in this unprecedented case, with the potential of seriously eroding the defendants’ ability to have a fair trial and adequate defense,” commented attorney Xavier T. de Janon about the Department of Justice’s unusual motion. “The government seeks to take away crucial, fact-based issues out of the hands of the jury, in the middle of the trial, after the evidence has already been introduced.”

Throughout the trial, supporters have rallied outside the courthouse to bring attention to the Prairieland case, to highlight numerous inconsistencies in court proceedings, and to remind everyone that these defendants are vital members of their local communities. Supporters have underscored from the beginning that the government is using this case as a way to spread fear, intimidate would-be dissidents, and suppress mass protest against the actions of ICE.

The Prairieland cases, involving 19 people charged with both state and federal charges, stem from a noise demonstration in solidarity with detainees at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas, on July 4, 2025. After the protest, an officer with the Alvarado Police Department allegedly became involved in an exchange of gunfire soon after arrival. The officer allegedly sustained minor injuries, and was reportedly released from the hospital shortly afterwards. Authorities have still not provided hospital records to justify these claims, seven months later. Alvarado police arrested ten people in the area, and a manhunt ensued in the subsequent days for another defendant. Eight more defendants were arrested in the days and weeks following the protest followed by one other, many months later.

March 6th - Cooperating Witness Testimony Contradicts State Case in Second Week of Landmark Prairieland ICE Detention Center Trial

Defendants in the landmark Prairieland trial were vindicated by testimony from cooperating state witnesses over the past three days, in a case that stems from a noise demonstration at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas on July 4, 2025. The prosecution called to the stand multiple defendants who have taken cooperating plea deals, affirming many of the defense’s key arguments about the case. The cooperating witnesses clearly stated that the noise demonstration was intended to show solidarity with those detained at the Prairieland facility, and not to enact violence, as the state has claimed. The witnesses also reiterated that defendants were not part of a unified group, let alone a terrorist organization. Their testimony also highlighted how conditions inside the jail created intense pressure to accept plea bargains, rather than a genuine admission of guilt.

Cooperating defendant Lynette Sharp’s testimony overwhelmingly strengthened the defense’s case, even though she was called as a witness by the federal government. On Thursday, Sharp continued her testimony from the previous day, when she began to cry while identifying the defendants in the courtroom, stating that they were “her friends,” and “[she] love[d] them.” In a major revelation, Sharp agreed with the defense that no one that night intended to hurt a police officer and instead stated, “From my understanding, it was a noise demo.”

Sharp further testified—contrary to the government’s allegations—that she was not a member of “antifa,” and that the left-wing reading group, the Emma Goldman Book Club, which several defendants allegedly attended, was not used to recruit individuals into “antifa.”

One of the most notable aspects of Sharp's testimony came when she revealed she had not written the statement of facts corresponding to her guilty plea. When asked by defense attorney Phillip Hayes why Sharp signed her plea, she explained that, "First they gave me 'accessory after the fact.' It was a very scary, confusing process. I was held in a facility with no medical care, and I felt I would die there," indicating a significant level of duress.

Sharp agreed with Hayes's assertion that she was offered to sign the deal or be indicted. As Sharp was describing her lack of sleep, the abuses she faced in Johnson County Jail, and the pressure she felt to speak with investigators, presiding US District Court Judge Mark Pittman abruptly halted the proceedings and ordered the Jury to be removed from the courtroom. Once the court was cleared, Judge Pittman then asked if Sharp's attorney would like to speak to her client about her testimony, and the pair left the courtroom.

The second cooperating defendant to take the stand, Seth Sikes, also gave testimony that strongly aligned with the defense's characterization of the demonstration. Sikes discussed the presence of firearms that night as a defensive tactic that, to his understanding, was largely meant to deter violence from counter protesters. Sikes also described radioing to others that "it was time to leave," when corrections officers began approaching, contradicting the government's narrative that there was a plan to attack the officers.

The prosecution is expected to call Kyle Shideler to the stand today as their expert witness on "antifa."

Shideler is a Director and Senior Analyst for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism at Center for Security Policy, one of the country's leading anti-Muslim think tanks that has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. During the first Trump administration, Center for Security Policy came under scrutiny for their far-right and anti-Muslim bias and bigotry after the organization issued a questionable report, claiming that "Sharia law" was the biggest domestic threat to the United States. These claims have since been widely criticized by mainstream and progressive experts as exaggerated and inaccurate. Shideler also has spent significant time in other right-wing think tanks, including as a 2017 Lincoln fellow at the Claremont Institute, a think tank which supported President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 election results.

Since at least 2020, Shideler has publicly fashioned himself an expert on "antifa," a shorthand moniker for Anti-Fascism, a broad political ideology. Shideler has given Congressional testimony about the supposed domestic terror threat of "antifa" and co-edited a book entitled *Unmasking Antifa: Five Perspectives of a Growing Threat* (2020). But some have raised serious concerns over the veracity of the claims made by Shideler on the topic. In a report filed with the court by defense attorneys for Prairieland defendant Zachary Evetts, Anne Speckhard, director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, stated that, "Mr. Shideler lacks the academic training, professional credentialing, and empirical research background required for expertise in criminology, extremism studies, social-movement analysis, or behavioral science." Later in the report, Speckhard remarks that, "Mr. Shideler's report demonstrates a longstanding pattern in his 'research' using fear-based conflation," and that "this pattern raises serious questions about the credibility of his motives and reliability in evaluating whether he possesses expertise, as defined by the law."

More recently, Shideler has drawn criticism for comments made on the news network NTD regarding the murder of anti-ICE demonstrator Alex Prettini by Customs and Border Patrol agents in Minneapolis. While discussing the incident, Shideler stated that, "This is the danger, you have agitators who are well-trained at provoking law enforcement, provoking individuals, and they're trying to get these types of video clips out there so that they can push their message through propaganda. "Outside the courtroom, supporters of the defendants have been maintaining a constant presence to inform the public about the case and assist the loved ones sitting in the courtroom. Yesterday, police threatened to cite supporters, forcing the removal of tables outside the courthouse being used to display zines and other relevant informational material on the case.

The nine defendants, Savanna Batten, Zachary Evetts, Autumn Hill, Meagan Morris, Maricela Rueda, Daniel “Des” Rolando Sanchez Estrada, Benjamin “Champagne” Song, Elizabeth Soto, and Ines Soto were indicted in November 2025 on a variety of charges including riot, discharging a firearm, attempted murder, material support for terrorism, and conspiracy to conceal documents, all stemming from a noise demonstration in support of immigrant detainees being held at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas.

March 11th - Defense Abruptly Rests Their Case Without Calling Witnesses, Followed by Closing Arguments Today in Landmark Prairieland ICE Protest Trial

In a surprise move, the defense rested their case yesterday without calling any witnesses. After ten full days of the prosecution’s case, it was expected that the defense would take at least until the end of the week to present their case, but lawyers abruptly moved for acquittal on all counts. The jury is expected to be sequestered for deliberation as early as today or tomorrow. The verdict is anticipated by many, who see the trial’s outcome as precedent-setting in the government’s aggressive approach toward political dissent.

Supporters of the Prairieland defendants will gather for a demonstration at 4pm and a press conference at 5pm, both at the southeast corner of Burk Burnett Park, across the street from the courthouse.

As the government wrapped up its case yesterday, Judge Mark Pittman questioned the prosecution’s need to cite Antifa in relation to the defendants’ charges. Prejudicial statements related to the Prairieland cases have been made repeatedly by officials at the highest levels of government, undermining the defendants’ ability to get a fair trial. The Trump administration has publicly claimed that the Prairieland case is the first legal case against Antifa, following their declaration of Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization.

The prosecution’s expert witness on Antifa, Kyle Shideler, testified Monday to his role in crafting a definition of Antifa for the federal government. Shideler works for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism at Center for Security Policy, an anti-Muslim think tank that has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Supporters are hopeful for a favorable verdict, given that the prosecution’s witnesses—including its key cooperating co-defendants—echoed the defense’s case. “I’m still pretty stunned at how the witnesses either agreed that this wasn’t a planned attack, or kept contradicting themselves,” said Lydia Koza, wife of defendant Autumn Hill. “At the end of the day, how can you say these people are guilty when the evidence is random stuff like literature and first aid kits, and the cooperating witnesses keep forgetting the script the prosecution wrote for them?”

While the federal trial is ending, a majority of the Prairieland defendants still face state-level charges and pending state trials. All but one of the defendants remain imprisoned due to state-level bonds of up to \$15 million. It is expected that, even if all defendants are acquitted federally, they will remain in pretrial detention until their bonds are reduced or their state trials take place. Regardless of the federal trial’s verdict, supporters will continue to stand in solidarity with their friends and loved ones until they are all free. “This nightmare isn’t over for us,” said Amber Lowrey, sister of defendant Savanna Batten. “I wish we could all go home tomorrow, but we have to keep fighting for our loved ones to get good lawyers, fair trials, and humane treatment in these horrible jails.”

March 13th - The Federal Trial is Over. What Will This Verdict Mean for Dissent?

Everything about this trial from beginning to end has proven what we have said all along: this is a sham trial, built on political persecution and ideological attacks coming from the top.

The state never had a case. The state only has its intimidation, torture, and suppression. The federal government came out in force: using repression, terrorism charges, home raids, multi-million-dollar bails, and torturous jail conditions.

What they wanted to do was to isolate the defendants, to control the public narrative. But people came together, spoke out, fought back, and set the tone for what's to come.

We have a long journey ahead of us to continue fighting these charges along with the state level charges. What happens here sets the tone for what's to come. We are here and we won't give up.

March 13th - Anti-ICE protesters accused of being part of antifa found guilty

by Sam Levine (*The Guardian*)

A group of protesters in Texas was found guilty of providing support for terrorism and other charges on Friday in a closely watched case in which prosecutors alleged anti-ICE activists were actually part of an antifa cell.

The case was seen as a major test of the first amendment and whether the government could use a broad anti-terrorism statute to prosecute leftwing protesters. It marked the first time the government alleged individuals were part of an antifa terrorist cell in a criminal prosecution.

Nine defendants – Benjamin Song, Zachary Evetts, Autumn Hill, Meagan Morris, Maricela Rueda, Savanna Batten, Ines Soto, Elizabeth Soto and Daniel Sanchez-Estrada – were all tried together in the case. They faced a mix of charges of providing material support to terrorists, rioting, attempted murder, as well as firearms and explosive charges.

Sanchez-Estrada was the only defendant not at the protest, and was only charged with corruptly concealing a document or record, after prosecutors say he moved leftwing zines following the arrest of his wife, Maricela Rueda, on the Fourth of July. Song also escaped after the incident and there was an 11-day manhunt for him. Several other people were charged with assisting Song during that period.

The nine defendants were convicted on all of the charges they faced, with limited exceptions. Of the five charged with attempted murder and firearms charges, Evetts, Hill, Morris and Rueda were acquitted. Song was acquitted on two charges of attempted murder and convicted on one. He was also convicted of the firearms charges.

Song faces a minimum of 20 years and a maximum of life in prison, according to the US attorney for the northern district of Texas. Arnold, Evetts, Morris, Rueda, Batten, Elizabeth Soto and Ines Soto each face between 10 and 60 years in prison. Sanchez Estrada faces up to 40 years.

The DFW Support Committee, a coalition that has been supporting the defendants, said in a post on X they were “heartbroken”. The defendants also face state charges.

“This is only the beginning. We will continue to fight the remaining charges until every defendant is home,” the group said. “Everything about this trial from beginning to end has proven what we have said all along: this is a sham trial, built on political persecution and ideological attacks coming from the top.”

“Antifa is a domestic terrorist organization that has been allowed to flourish in Democrat-led cities – not under President Trump,” Pam Bondi, the attorney general, said in a statement. “Today’s verdict on terrorism charges will not be the last as the Trump administration systematically dismantles antifa and finally halts their violence on America’s streets.”

After the killing of Charlie Kirk last year, Trump administration officials vowed to go after leftwing groups and designated antifa, short for anti-fascist, as a domestic terrorist group, even though the president did not have the lawful authority to do so. Antifa is also not an organization but instead used to describe a constellation of leftwing beliefs. Some have described antifa as an idea and equated designating it a terror organization akin to designating Marxism or feminism as a terror group.

The case centered around a protest on the Fourth of July last year at the Prairieland detention center just outside of Fort Worth. A group of demonstrators dressed in dark clothing arrived at the facility just after 10:30pm and had planned to set off fireworks as part of a noise demonstration to show solidarity with the protesters inside. Shortly after arriving at the facility, two or three of the protesters broke away from the larger group and began spray painting cars in the parking lot, a guard shack, slashed the tires on a government van, and broke a security camera. Two ICE detention guards came out and told the protesters to stop. A police officer arrived on the scene shortly after and drew his weapon at one of the people allegedly doing vandalism. One of the protesters was standing in the woods with an AR-15 and hit him in the shoulder. The officer would survive.

Some of the defendants did not know each other before the protests, while others met through self-defense classes, the Socialist Rifle Association, and a leftwing book club. The demonstrators brought a cache of weapons, including rifles and bulletproof vests, to Prairieland, but left all but one in a van they used to carpool there.

It is undisputed that there was only one shooter, Song, but prosecutors said the event was a coordinated ambush in which the demonstrators used the fireworks to lure guards from the facility and police and then attack them. The defendants strongly disputed that, saying they planned for a peaceful protest that ultimately went awry. They say they brought the firearms – all purchased legally – for self-defense.

The jury's verdict signaled that they did not buy the government's argument about an ambush, said Cody Cofer, a lawyer representing Hill, who was acquitted on attempted murder and firearms charges.

"We are thankful that the jury could see through the Government's fear mongering Antifa 'ambush' narrative. We are afraid that our client's guilty verdicts for Riot and related charges resulted from a compromise during deliberations or failure to consider our client's individual conduct," he said. "As we move into the sentencing phase of the case, it is fortunate that the judge was able to see a more complete picture than what the Government has painted in the indictment and press releases. We still have First Amendment and sufficiency of the evidence issues to address on appeal. We look forward to continuing this fight."

Throughout the trial, prosecutors focused on several protest tactics they said was evidence that the demonstrators coordinated an ambush on law enforcement or should have reasonably expected one to occur. They pointed to the fact that the demonstrators took steps to prevent their cell phones from being tracked.

Prosecutors also pointed to the way that the protesters used Signal, a widely-used messaging application, as evidence of their coordination and conspiracy. The protesters used pseudonyms on the app and had messages autodelete, an increasingly common practice among protesters and journalists who are concerned about government surveillance. They also emphasized the defendants were wearing all black during the protest, sometimes describing it as "tactical" gear. While the defendants were dressed in dark clothing, defense lawyers highlighted that many of the things they wore could be bought by the public at a retail store like Walmart.

But the idea that violence was expected was undercut at times by the government's own witnesses. Several witnesses who took plea deals testified that they were surprised when the protest turned to violence.

During the trial, the government offered a slew of circumstantial evidence aimed at convincing the jury that the defendants were part of an antifa terror cell. They showed the jury zines and reading lists with incendiary titles that were seized from the defendants. One zine seized was titled *The satanic death cult is real*. The zine is an essay analyzing the films "Hereditary" and "Midsommar." They also displayed anti-Trump stickers seized from one of the defendants that said "Make America not Exist Again" and a pamphlet from the Socialist Rifle Association that showed someone putting a swastika into a garbage can.

“We are thankful that the jury could see through the Government’s fear mongering Antifa “ambush” narrative. We are afraid that our client’s guilty verdicts for Riot and related charges resulted from a compromise during deliberations or failure to consider our client’s individual conduct,” said Cody Cofer, one of Hill’s lawyers. “As we move into the sentencing phase of the case, it is fortunate that the judge was able to see a more complete picture than what the Government has painted in the indictment and press releases. We still have First Amendment and sufficiency of the evidence issues to address on appeal. We look forward to continuing this fight.”

Attorneys for the defendants argued that the government was punishing protesters because they disliked their beliefs.

“The government is asking you to put protesters in prison as terrorists. You are the only people who can stop that,” Blake Burns, an attorney for Elizabeth Soto, said during his closing statement to jurors.

Sanchez Estrada’s attorney, Christopher Weinbel, said he can’t believe jurors “came to this conclusion”. Weinbel said he was deployed as a member of the army several times in the defense of the US, and he’d hoped what he sacrificed “meant something”.

“But I feel like it turned its back on justice with this, Weinbel said. “The US lost today with this verdict.”

Even though prosecutors focused on antifa throughout the case, and the justice department touted the allegation in press releases and public statements, it was not really legally relevant to the terrorism charge they face. The statute they were charged under does not require any kind of relationship to a terrorist organization. Instead, it merely says someone provides material support to terrorists if they assist them in carrying out a list of specific federal crimes. In this case, prosecutors said the underlying terrorism crimes were damaging government property and attempting to kill law enforcement.

During his closing statement, prosecutor Shawn Smith told jurors the defendant’s antifa beliefs were not why they were on trial, according to *KERA*. “They’re here because they used these tactics that assisted in the ambush of a cop,” he said.

Mark Pittman, a US district judge nominated to the federal bench by Donald Trump in 2019, appeared to gesture at the irrelevance of antifa in the closing moments of the trial, asking prosecutors why he should mention it in his instructions to the jury, underlining the gap between the emphasis on antifa and the technicality of the criminal charges they faced.

“Whether it’s antifa or the Methodist Women’s Auxiliary, why does it matter?” Pittman said.

March 13th - Feds Used My Movie Review to Label Protester as "Terrorist"

by Sophie Lewis (*The Intercept*)

It was a Saturday in February, and I was checking my email inbox on my phone for no particular reason, during a conference. A *Mother Jones* reporter had written a note, so I opened it.

It’s not so unusual for me to receive press inquiries — I am a feminist writer who touches on hot-button issues — but this particular email I never could have predicted. It was about an infamous federal case against people arrested in connection to a protest against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Last July 4, a group of people had gathered for a demonstration against ICE’s Prairieland Detention Facility in Alvarado, Texas. It was a noise demo during which a police officer was shot. Some 18 people were arrested and charged for the protest.

The government’s indictment against the Prairieland protesters stood as a chilling development in President Donald Trump’s war on dissent: It was the first time that terrorism-related charges had been brought against people for allegedly being part of an “antifa cell.”

Did I have any thoughts, the *Mother Jones* reporter wanted to know, on the prosecution using an essay by me in a terrorism trial?

Excuse me?

The essay in question: a film review I wrote in 2019 about the horror movies “Hereditary” and “Midsommar.”

I blinked twice, rubbed my eyes, and then began digging around on the internet to understand.

To my astonishment, prosecutors had introduced my seven-year-old analysis of feminism’s relationship to horror cinema as “evidence of ideologically driven intent” the previous day.

Although I published the piece in *Commune* magazine, the review had been printed in zine format — and that was what authorities seized from the Dallas home of one of the defendants, Daniel Sanchez Estrada, last summer.

“Guilt by Literature”

The appearance of my review in the trial is a brazen attempt at conjuring “guilt by literature” — just one of the tactics prosecutors have used to criminalize speech and use First Amendment-protected speech as a legal weapon against the Trump administration’s political enemies.

Nobody, by the way, is suggesting that Estrada shot or conspired to shoot the officer. He stands accused of two crimes: attempting to conceal documents “by transporting a box containing numerous Antifa materials” and conspiracy to conceal those zines. He faces up to 20 years in prison.

Estrada isn’t himself facing terror charges, but he being tarred with the label by his association with this so-called “antifa cell.” What Estrada’s case most acutely represents is the way the President Donald Trump conflates antifa and terrorism to do things like criminalize the transportation of zines — in other words, simple First Amendment protected activity.

Trump pulled this off by deeming antifa a “major terrorist organization” — a legal designation that doesn’t even exist for domestic groups — ignoring the fact that antifa is an orientation, not a group.

The feds, as Natasha Lennard notes, tend to try to evidence such charges by collecting circumstantial evidence of individual crimes alleged to have taken place “in the context of” legal protest activity — even when there is no direct link between those charged and the alleged crimes.

The charge may or may not stick — often they don’t — but the lawfare from above serves a terrorizing end in itself, she explains, since “the lengthy prosecutions hamper protest movements and chill dissent.”

Why My Review?

I need to ask: Why my review? And the truth is I don’t really have a great answer.

There is a rich irony here: My little horror movie review was introduced to prove a conception of antifa that — like many of the monsters we scream at in horror flicks — isn’t quite real.

The title of my essay — which is to say, of the zine seized from the accused’s house in Dallas — is “The Satanic Death-Cult Is Real.” It refers to the fictional demon-worshipping ceremony in the final scene of “Hereditary” as well as, at the same time, to the all-too-real, madness-inducing logic of the private nuclear household.

From my ego's standpoint, it's painful to assume that anyone is refusing to read beyond my titles before reacting. (It's a tragically common occurrence: I'm the author, after all, of books about the communization of care with titles like "Full Surrogacy Now" and "Abolish the Family.")

It seems, though, that the FBI didn't read beyond the cover of what it calls my "booklet." That was the description of my review-in-zine-form when it appeared in an itemized receipt for seized property, alongside cellphones, computers, weapons, and other bits of technology — for the sole reason that it is willing to throw anything, no matter how absurd, at anti-ICE activists to paint them as vile terrorists.

When the *Mother Jones* reporter messaged, I replied immediately, from my phone, in a state of agitation. It ought to be surprising, I pointed out, that possession of a printout of some film criticism could be brandished as evidence of a treasonous conspiracy against the United States government, yet — in 2026 — it is not.

"Perhaps," indeed, I wrote, "there is an element of truth in the state's preposterous linking of the mere implication of having read antifascist culture writing about the private nuclear family in [director] Ari Aster's oeuvre with the alleged crime of belonging to a cell of an organization — antifa — that, as we all know, doesn't even exist."

Thankfully, however, organized antifascism does exist. I proudly accept the notion that any of my writings have helped in any small way to stoke the desire to practice antifascism, courageously and practically, as those blocking and protesting the brutality of American stormtroopers are doing all over the world.

If nothing else, I'm grateful that the FBI seized my book review and that prosecutors hauled it out in this ridiculous trial, because it gave me the opportunity to express my full solidarity with the Prairieland defendants.

3 Mar - After jail, house arrest and an ankle monitor, a reprieve for a 'Cop City' protester: 'The process was the punishment'

With no conviction, John Mazurek's felony arson case for allegedly torching police motorcycles will finally be resolved

MORE:

by Timothy Pratt (*The Guardian*)

On the phone from his Atlanta house last week, John "Jack" Mazurek said he felt "a few pounds lighter".

It was no wonder. The 33-year-old Georgia carpenter was in a new reality, after resolving a three-year case involving attempts to charge him with felony arson for allegedly torching police motorcycles as part of a protest movement against a police training center known as Cop City.

The arson charge in Fulton County carried a sentence of up to 20 years. Superior court judge Emily Richardson agreed last week to having Mazurek take what's known as an Alford plea to a reduced charge of criminal damage to property and a decade of probation.

The case's long unwinding follows several others connected to the movement against Cop City in recent months – including a judge's dismissal, in September, of RICO, or racketeering, charges against 61 defendants. State attorney general Chris Carr has appealed.

The training center opened last spring on a 171-acre (70-hectare) footprint in a forest south-east of Atlanta despite protests that garnered international attention, especially after one protester was shot and killed by police. Opposition had come from a range of local and national organizations and was centered on concerns such as unchecked police militarization and clearing forests in an era of climate crisis. Atlanta police said the center was needed for "world-class" training.

Protests against it included the destruction of construction equipment and arson. It also included occupying a nearby forest, efforts to mount a referendum that gathered the signatures of more than 100,000 voters, historic levels of public participation in city council meetings, lawsuits and numerous protests.

Mazurek's case started with the burning of several motorcycles, on 1 July 2023 at around 2am – the last day of a so-called “week of action” by protesters against Cop City. Seven months later, on 8 February 2024, local police and federal agents wearing balaclavas staged a Swat-style raid on Mazurek's house. A national search for information followed, including 450 billboards in cities across the US and a \$200,000 reward.

Mazurek spent two months locked up in local jails. During this period and since, he estimates receiving up to a thousand letters of support from across the US as well as Canada and Europe. These included letters “from friends I hadn't seen in years, telling me how I had affected their lives”, Mazurek said. “It was like attending my own funeral.”

When Mazurek was released from jail, authorities didn't notify anyone at his house. It was 4am. “I took a bus and train home and remember walking into my neighborhood and crying, seeing the flowers and the bumblebees,” he said.

After being released, a judge ordered Mazurek to be placed under 24-hour house arrest and to wear an ankle monitor. Police cars would pass by his house and those of his friends, honking horns or shining lights late at night.

Six months later, his attorney convinced the judge to loosen the house arrest restrictions, but he wore the ankle monitor another 12 months.

After that restriction was removed, Mazurek had to download an app on his phone that would go off at all hours, requiring him to take a photo of himself. By this time, he and his partner had had a baby; the app's alarm would stir them from sleep, bringing memories, he said, of being woken by officers breaking into his house with automatic weapons drawn, pointing a red beam at his face.

An unidentified, hidden camera was also placed on a utility pole outside Mazurek's house. It was removed after the *Guardian* reported on it and fourth amendment concerns.

Despite all this, Fulton County prosecutor George Jenkins's presentation of evidence against Mazurek in court last week was basically the same as two years ago. It centered on a soda bottle recovered at the scene and fashioned into an incendiary device that allegedly had what's known as trace DNA from Mazurek.

But Mazurek's attorney Lauren C Brown told the *Guardian* that a lab called Independent Forensics' analysis of the evidence revealed there was genetic material from up to five more people on the bottle, none of whom were in the extensive database different agencies have built in five years of attempts to prosecute people connected to the movement against Cop City.

Additionally, Brown said, “with the amount of [Mazurek's] DNA, you can't determine if he even touched the bottle”.

The prosecutor also pointed to a journal with anti-government sentiments, a birthday card found in his house that included the words, “kill a cop” and the fact of Mazurek sending a text message about a music group playing during the week of action.

Toward the end of the hour-long hearing last week occasionally interrupted by his eight-month-old son's gurgling, Mazurek and the prosecution agreed to the lesser charge as part of a non-cooperating plea. Judge

Richardson said Mazurek must stay away from any “activities, movements, rallies or protests ... outwardly expressing or proclaiming anti-government sentiment” – for the next decade.

Mazurek also agreed not to associate with “Defend the Atlanta Forest”, which the prosecutor called a group, but which was in reality a social media account used to broadcast messages about the movement, with no defined membership.

He noted the challenge in meeting both terms: “‘Anti-government’: who defines that?” he told the *Guardian*. “Is going to a punk rock show a violation?”

Will Potter, a journalist who has written about protest movements for decades, said such probation terms are common in politically motivated prosecutions. “It’s meant to further tighten the screws on both the defendant and the community – to isolate them and pull them out of legitimate, first amendment activity,” Potter said.

Mazurek noted that being locked up, the house arrest and the surveillance happened without him ever going to trial. “The process itself was meant to be the punishment,” he said. “They used the pretrial period as a sentence despite [me] not being convicted of anything.”

Mazurek wrote a statement about his experience of the last few years. “This case was never about bringing so-called justice to a perpetrator for an alleged crime. It was about instilling fear in a strong movement that shook this city to its core and exposed it’s [sic] dirtiest inner workings,” he said.

“Much of what the movement against Cop City assumed has already come to pass. Today, Minneapolis and other cities across the US act as training grounds for federal agents to practice unleashing terror on migrants, political opponents and random citizens alike. Cop City in Atlanta was only one stop on the incessant march to a cop nation.”

March 3rd - A Statement From Jack

This morning, after much deliberation with family and friends, I chose to take a non-cooperating plea agreement to reduced charges. Rather than face trial for arson carrying a potential 20-year prison sentence, I have entered an Alford plea, which allows me to maintain my innocence while avoiding trial. The state sought one year in jail etc etc. I have been sentenced to time served with ten years of probation. While this is not an acquittal, it is an outcome I can live with, one that allows me to remain here with my community. The case against me was built up around a single piece of alleged evidence, a bit of touch DNA found on a bottle cap at the scene of burned APD motorcycles. Due to the flimsy nature of this single piece of alleged evidence, the state sought to use my political views and activities to bolster their case. When they raided my home on February 8, 2024, they hoped to uncover an explosives factory. Instead, all they found was the banal horror of their own disgruntled constituency. Although the case concocted against me was weak, and I believe that would have been evident at trial, risking 20 years of my life in our current political climate was no small decision. After two years of waiting, the state ultimately agreed to all of the terms that we had asked for in order to even consider accepting a plea: non-cooperation, an Alford plea, first offender treatment, and no prison time. I have never been much of a gambler and so, after careful consideration, I chose the sure thing. Only about 2% of cases in the US ever make it to trial and that only speaks to the brokenness of the court system.

This case was never about bringing so-called justice to a perpetrator for an alleged crime. It was about instilling fear in a strong movement that shook this city to its core and exposed its dirtiest inner workings. Cop City will forever be a stain on the pages of this city’s history, marked indelibly by the courage of those who resisted it.

The glow of red dots scanning my living room before finding their home on my forehead still haunts me. Many nights I still hear the flash bangs. I think of the masked men who charged into my dining room and how they went home to have dinner after, that it was just another day at work. The depravity of the world is

held up by those who are just following orders. These events have defined the past 2 years of my life: the uncertainty, the dread, the fear. I spent time in one of the most notorious jails in the country. I watched my home transformed into a prison which I could not leave, the very same home that masked men stormed into with guns drawn. I have had a camera disguised as an electrical box placed on a lightpole outside of my home, been followed in my vehicle, and had my movements constantly tracked by ankle monitor. I have had my picture blasted all over the news and was featured in a special press conference with Mr. Andre Dickens. I have had the ATF call my lawyer to threaten me ahead of protests, to attempt to scare me and those around me into silence. Cops have sat outside of my home and blared their sirens in the middle of the night. One night I awoke to a lit flare placed in the bushes against my house. And yet, despite all of these attempts to break me, I stand here before you with my head held high. I stand here because when I stand here, I know that it is not just my flesh and bones that hold me up, but something much bigger. A body stronger than any I could ever inhabit. I know that I am not alone. I know that my friends, family, and comrades hold me up, and I know that I come from a long line of brave people who have fought, died, and been imprisoned in the struggle for a better world. I stand here strong because I owe it to them.

Repression is designed to break us, to weaken our commitments to one another. It is designed to individualize us, to instill fear and mistrust. Throughout this process, at times, I have felt scared, and I have felt alone. The prospect of losing 20 years of my life, the violence of a life stolen, is not a small thing to bear. It is heavy. It weighs on you. It is to be presented with your own mortality, to be forced to face it head on. This is a sobering thing, and yet, in many ways, it is the most human thing. I have done my best to grow throughout this experience, to understand the fragility of life, and to appreciate every moment I have, no matter where I am. This reckoning with life and mortality is a stark reminder that a life worth living is something worth fighting for. Much of what the movement against Cop City assumed has already come to pass. Today, Minneapolis and other cities across the US act as training grounds for federal agents to practice unleashing terror on migrants, political opponents, and random citizens alike. Cop City in Atlanta was only one stop on the incessant march to a cop nation. The movement was always about something bigger than one training site, and I am confident that the wisdom forged by the movement against Cop City in Atlanta will continue to inform a new generation. There is no doubt this empire is caught in the tightening coils of its own death spiral. While the task may seem insurmountable, the future will belong to those who are brave enough to organize and act against seemingly impossible odds. In closing, I am immensely grateful for the support I received during the time I spent in jail and on house arrest, for all of the letters, the donations, the books, and the words of encouragement. The horror of the state was eclipsed only by the love of comrades. Seeing highways and trains painted with free jack, receiving letters of solidarity from children in New York and Atlanta; friends who popped over for a game of chess while I was stuck on house arrest, local diy spaces and businesses that showed up for me with food and fundraisers, artists who donated art, musicians who played shows, inmates who slid an extra peanut butter sack under the cell door, shared books and newspapers, and who taught me how to sew with a staple and turn ramen packets into a dozen other meals. These things all kept me alive. I spent hours reading letters on the jail kiosk every day, I could not have made it through without them. I will forever be grateful to the movement that held me up and supported me through these dark times. While the world appears to only be getting darker, it is an honor to know such a great light. Please continue to support the RICO 61 and all those facing charges. Long live the spirit of Tortugueta.

4 Mar - New Political Prisoner on our list

Malik Muhammad has been incarcerated since the Floyd Uprising but is now receiving support from the ABCF.

MORE:

Malik is a Black/Palestinian pansexual Muslim, anarchist, antifascist and anti-racist abolitionist. They were charged with possession of unregistered destructive devices, engaging in civil disorder and obstructing law enforcement and using explosives to commit a felony. They have a young child. Malik has a long history of protesting and associated actions for Black liberation.

On April 5th, 2021 Malik was arrested in Indiana, and then extradited to Oregon. They were given a \$2.1 million bail. Through great struggle, the required 10% of it was met by the Portland Freedom Fund, but revoked the next day. Within 24 hours of their release, Malik was rearrested by federal officers. They were then imprisoned in Multnomah County where they were held in solitary confinement for around 90 days.

On July 29th Malik was moved, pretrial, to the state's only federal prison, FCI Sheridan. At Sheridan, They participated in a hunger strike that successfully increased prisoners free-time from 30 minutes every other day to four hours per day everyday, and one day per week outside for recreation. In 2022, they were sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Malik has been writing about their thoughts and experiences when incarcerated at:
malikspeaks.noblogs.org

In his own words:

My name is Malik Farrad Muhammad. I'm a black/Palestinian pansexual Muslim (yes, hella confusing). I'm an anarchist antifascist, anti-racist abolitionist (yes, both cops and prisons) for my love of freedom! My first protest was in high school: a walkout staged after Treyvon Martin's murder. From there, I never really got active again until "Bernie or Bust" and then, of course, the George Floyd uprising. I traveled the country and organized and fought and was ultimately kidnapped, ransomed and now held prisoner here at OSP.

I have a beautiful son, a beautiful wife and life partner, Jesse, who moved out here to Portland after my kidnapping by the feds, and a loving family back home in the Midwest. I'm also a veteran, I was a tanker in the army — and no, I'm not proud that I was part of the murder machine, so don't thank me for my service. I love music more than anything almost, am a guitarist and aspiring pianist, all genres. Not much else to say except that I'm a lover of freedom, equity and equality, and will fight to my last breath for it. Unlike those who may regret a thing they did to get convicted or those who tempered their actions for fear of the consequences, I regret nothing, if only not doing more before I was caught. I will live for the people and I'll die for the people because I love the people, we who want freedom cannot rest till it comes.

6 Mar - On Revolutionary Love

Please read the latest by Xinachtli.

MORE:

In celebration of Valentine's Day, which is always on February the 14th, I understand the meaning of that celebration of love between two individuals to two persons, that part of the love that we had, when we joined unions, when we join marriages and so forth, it could be even of our friendships, that's okay with me.

But the thing is, what I'm looking at on tomorrow, February the 14th is that there's also another element to LOVE, in the sense of not being connected to the capitalist markets, not being connected to the capitalist ideology that we have all been indoctrinated with. All liberation movements and oppressed people should look into the revolutionary love that we must nurture between people who love the struggle. People who understand the necessity, especially now in these times of fascism.

Fascism is here, as George Jackson said. People are living butchered lives. Not only that but people are dying for taking the stand in defense of the oppressed, in defense of immigrants, in defense of prisoners, in defense of the poor, in defense of LGBTQ+ community, you know, on and on and on. You know what I'm saying? I mean, you see the brutality, the brutality that's going on the murderers of innocent people who go into the streets like in Minnesota, like in Los Angeles.

First of all, we must decolonize our mind. Through that process, it's a dialectical process, because remember the different colonial, neo-colonial system has always defined itself to erase our historical language. To dehumanize, to dehumanize us, first by taking possession of our ancestral lands and then and then conditioning us to be in the mentality of them. To think a certain way that celebrates capital, and I mean between individual rights. You know this vision of competition, because that's what that what

capitalism is. You compete with individuals. You compete within corporations. The strong will survive. The big fish eats the smaller fish. That's what capitalism represents.

In my consciousness, it's freeing myself of that mentality, to embracing that mentality of revolutionary love for our community, for people who are oppressed, for people who are under siege. That's what I'm talking about. Love for community care for community health, for community unity, for community prosperity for independence from colonialism, capitalism. For establishing a right to autonomy or creating our own spaces. What this campaign is doing here, we are creating our own spaces, which is amazing. I mean, that's where people power grows. Creating this economy, creating this thing for our own self-determination, so we can, so we can, you know, own our own destiny. So, we can create our own destiny. We don't need kings, queens or fascists to tell us how to run our lives. We create our own community. We create our own system of justice. We don't need the capitalist state, we don't need the police state to administer justice to our people. We separate ourselves from the capitalist economy. We must create the economy that is helpful to our liberation to our complete liberation from freeing our mind to freeing our labor power.

This is the decolonization we have to go through. And we go through that, realizing our, using the word of Indigenous nations of "right power," to not only free in our mind, but to create bases—for example, this freedom campaign all of you have created.

This is political re-education—that's the most important key to our liberation.

That's why this prison system hates me because they see the revolutionary love that I have for the prisoner class. Those who want to change their life, go through a metamorphosis. Go through a transformation of our souls, of our hearts, of our minds, to stop this state cycle of violence.

11 Mar - Interview with anarchist prisoner Francisco Solar

Chile: In this fourth interview, Informativo Anarquista engaged in a dialogue with anarchist Francisco Solar, acting as a bridge to spread his words and delve deeper into various topics and contexts of interest. For brevity, we have included an abridged version below.

MORE:

via Informativo Anarquista

His perspective and participation in grassroots projects are vitally important, as they break with the inaction that prison seeks to impose. Throughout this conversation, we address not only aspects related to his personal experience in prison, but also broader political reflections on the ongoing struggles and challenges facing anarchist circles.

Informativo Anarquista (IA): How are you doing now? Could you tell us a little about your experience in La Gonzalina prison? What differences do you see between the prison systems in Europe and Chile?

Francisco Solar (FS): Almost a year ago, I left the maximum-security wing where I had spent almost five years and moved to a high security wing with a normal regime, which basically means eight hours of yard time and the possibility of conjugal visits.

Based on the above, my situation is clearly more favorable, as I am not subject to the restrictions of a maximum-security regime. However, sharing my daily life with fellow anarchists and subversives who were already in this unit makes prison life much more bearable. Escaping at times from the harmful authoritarian dynamics that exist among prisoners and trying to practice relationships that are contrary to these is a constant challenge and struggle that involves constant questioning. It is clear that we are not an island within this unit; we deal with contradictions and obviously sometimes reproduce behaviors that we say we reject. However, our dynamics, those of the anarchist and subversive prisoners, are different from those of the rest of the prisoners. Our relationships are not based on the stark authoritarianism of the other prisoners, and that is evident.

My daily routine consists of playing sports in the yard, talking and walking with my compañeros, and reading. As I have pointed out in other writings, it is important to have a daily routine, which, at least in my case, allows me to maintain a certain mental clarity and avoid falling into prison despair.

The differences between the Chilean prison system and that of Spain lie mainly in control. The Spanish prison system has managed to discipline life inside prisons through constant and prolonged adjustments to its control strategies. Through the FIES (Ficheros de Internos de Especial Seguimiento, Special Investigation and Security Unit) and dispersion, the Prison Service has pacified Spanish prisons, even managing to turn prisoners into their own jailers, as can be seen in the increasingly numerous “respect modules.”

Although the Chilean prison system is moving towards exercising control in the “Spanish” (or European) manner, the truth is that it is still a long way from achieving this. The control mechanisms are much more precarious and ineffective, which leads, among other things, to the establishment of certain “rules” imposed by the prisoners themselves within prison life. These rules are based on extreme authoritarianism that produces and reproduces relationships of outright slavery among the prisoners themselves. If solidarity was once present in these dynamics, today such relationships have been virtually relegated to make way for ostentation and the aforementioned authoritarianism that makes prison life a hostile environment.

IA: In the text “A necessary complicit dialogue,” you refer to the concept of “large-scale anarchic actions,” while in “The risks of multiformity” you ask yourself and argue that: “Are large-scale actions and ‘simple’ actions the same thing? Is placing an explosive in a police station the same as spraying graffiti on a wall or painting a banner? Clearly not. They are not the same in terms of their planning, dedication, or what is at stake. They are not the same in terms of their impact or the repercussions they generate.” From reading these communiqués, we note that you apply the concept of “large-scale” to define direct destructive actions, while you define propaganda actions as “simple.” However, both definitions are categorized as “actions.” Would it then be appropriate to redefine the concept of “action,” or is the adjective that follows it sufficient?

FS: I think that the important thing about language, whether written or spoken, is that what you want to communicate is understood. From your question, I gather that I made myself perfectly clear in what I tried to express in those texts, so the function of language in this case fulfilled its purpose. Therefore, it doesn’t matter what you call what you want to express, as long as the meaning is ultimately understood.

Now, every action involves energy that alters reality in one way or another, so making a banner and putting it up is clearly an action, as is painting a mural or filling the streets of the city with posters. Clearly, planting an explosive device, shooting at the police, or any other complex attack also correspond to actions for the same reason mentioned above. However, as I stated in the writings, there are differences that mean they cannot be assessed in the same way. It is therefore important to make a distinction in language when addressing them, as it is clear that we are not talking about the same type of actions.

Complex actions, large-scale actions, violent revolutionary attacks: these are terms I use to refer to the same type of action. These are acts that, due to their characteristics, involve greater risks and a different level of decision-making, among other aspects, which differentiate them from other types of actions. In short, since the latter are also actions, I think it is most appropriate to describe the former with an adjective to make their difference and particularities with respect to the others explicit.

IA: In the text “Faced with covert life imprisonment, action is always worthwhile,” you comment that the stagnation of anarchist actions may be due to “a post-revolt effect that seems to have led to demobilization in various environments and among individuals.” We believe that the effects of the revolt are still present within anarchist circles, from the lack of criticism and/or self-criticism regarding individuals who have participated in elections and continue to be part of anarchist projects, or the hybrid created between anarchists who understand electoral submission for the defense of social and human rights and the outdated

rhetoric that a right-wing government will exercise the police state more forcefully, when the left has been responsible for strongly reinforcing that position of control. Do you think that anarchist individuals have lost their anti-state essence by defending issues such as social and human rights? How do you think reflection can help us rediscover the positions we have defended?

FS: There has undoubtedly been a lack of self-criticism in our circles regarding our role in the uprising and what could have been done. The enthusiasm for the new constitution that led many people in our circles to vote “yes” and then, as if that weren’t enough, to elect and, in some cases, campaign for Boric, clearly shows that we do not all understand freedom in the same way, nor are we all pulling in the same direction.

With our comrades at Kalinov Most magazine, we have written several articles pointing out how surprising it is to have to address the issue of electoral participation, an issue that seemed to have been resolved years ago. Anarchism has historically positioned itself as alien to and opposed to elections, and it is important to maintain that position and even strengthen it. Therefore, we find it tedious and boring to discuss this issue again. The fact that individuals and some groups participated in the electoral circus shows that at crucial and decisive moments there are “comrades” who set aside the basic principles of anarchism. It also shows that our movement is not as solid as we think, as there are sectors that freely embrace democratic options that have nothing to do with ours.

Throughout this interview, I have referred to the “movement” as the broad anarchist world with its different tendencies that share certain basic principles that translate into concrete practices. However, I also understand that within these tendencies there are those who are committed to the creation of affinity groups to advance anarchy. Personally, I subscribe to the latter view, as I believe that affinity groups are the most appropriate way for anarchists to relate to each other because of the freedom and dynamism they afford us. On that basis, I generate affinity with comrades with whom I share ideas and practices, and with whom I obviously have no insurmountable differences.

Therefore, I could never participate in an affinity group with people who choose to take part in elections, let alone those who have decided to campaign for any candidate. However, this is an individual decision and it is up to each affinity group to establish criteria and interact with whomever they please.

IA: Recently, several anarchist comrades from different territories have died in action, accidents, suicides, illnesses, etc. Kyriakos, Belén, Tortuga, Risue, Snizana, and Lupi are some of them. At the same time, a discourse full of purism and dogmatism has spread, similar to that of militarized leftist groups, which draws boundaries between comrades who have died in combat and those who have not. Do you consider the suicide or natural death of a comrade in struggle to be a perpetual descent into oblivion? What should be the meaning, value, and practice of memory in the face of the death of our comrades in struggle?

FS: Starting with the end of the question, I have no doubt that the meaning and practice of memory must necessarily be an action that is far removed from and contrary to any victim mentality. Memory that translated into action is the most appropriate way to remember our dead comrades. Understanding memory in this way strengthens the anarchist world with a focus on combat. It undoubtedly strengthens our offensive practices by attempting to reproduce and multiply the permanent attack.

However, I believe that in this particular aspect, a concept comes into play that is often repeated in our circles but rarely practiced. I am referring to the development of an iconoclastic position, understood as the rejection of the sacralization of figures, whether human or not. The glorification of dead comrades, even those of other political tendencies, is a custom that runs through the entire subversive culture of this territory, including, of course, the anarchist world. People talk and write about iconoclasm and the need not to turn our dead into heroes or martyrs, but at the same time they are elevated as unquestionable figures, continuing, in one way or another, the leftist tradition on this issue. Because I think it is undeniable that the exaltation of our dead comrades in our spaces, in form and substance, corresponds to a legacy of the militarist left. It is an element that we have adopted, reproducing it, perhaps, with a few nuances. I believe we must question this continuity.

It is essential to reflect and draw collective conclusions regarding the necessary iconoclastic stance and the vindication of our dead in order to develop our own position that is free from any kind of sacralization. Along with this, there seems to be an urgent need to focus our efforts on vindicating our dead, and I think it is because of this need that in recent years, with no comrades having fallen in combat, we have begun to vindicate comrades who have left us for causes and in circumstances unrelated to war.

I am not saying that these comrades should be forgotten. It is essential to promote an active memory that keeps them present through action. However, their memory must point to the essence, it must point to the actions that the comrade carried out and for which they left us on the physical plane. Ultimately, the content must prevail over the figure, otherwise we will only be creating heroes and martyrs.

13 Mar - One year after her arrest, a judge has ordered Leqaa Kordia to be released from ICE detention for the third time

As an immigration judge orders her release for the third time, Leqaa Kordia's team is moving quickly to release her before DHS imposes another stay. The Palestine activist is the last Columbia student protester to remain in ICE detention.

MORE:

by Sam Judy (*Mondoweiss*)

One year ago, on March 13, 2025, Palestinian Columbia protester Leqaa Kordia was arrested and detained after turning herself into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in New Jersey.

Today, Friday, March 13, 2026, an immigration judge just ordered her release for the third time.

In her third and final bond hearing, Kordia's lawyer Sarah Sherman-Stokes, once again presented ample evidence that, despite arguments from DHS, her client is not a flight risk and should be eligible for bond.

Kordia is the last remaining Columbia protester in detention and was arrested shortly after fellow protester Mahmoud Khalil. While detained, Kordia's health has taken a drastic downturn amidst harsh conditions inside Prairieland Detention Center, which has received numerous complaints related to overcrowding, lack of medical resources, unsanitary facilities, and more.

During Friday's hearing, Immigration Judge Tara Naslow was receptive to Kordia's team, at several points expressing frustration with DHS' lack of preparedness and inconsistency. Pointing out, despite DHS' lawyer Anastasia Norcross's argument that no bond should be set, that DHS' appeal stated that the current bond of \$20,000 is "insufficient," only implying that the current bond is not high enough.

"I tried to get an answer from higher ups on the case," Norcross explained regarding dissonance between the appeal and arguments presented at the hearing.

Judge Naslow also stated that, despite seeing "thousands of pages of evidence from the respondent," she's seen nothing consequential from DHS. The judge also states that, in her estimation, Kordia poses "no risk."

"My hands are kind of tied here. Obviously, I agree with you that the \$20,000 bond was sufficient," Judge Naslow said before explaining that DHS will almost certainly impose another stay.

Before granting release upon payment of \$100,000, in hopes of satisfying DHS' previous argument of insufficient bond, the judge also pointed out that Kordia's ongoing visa petition would be a viable avenue of release in 60 days in the event of another DHS appeal. Sherman-Stokes also noted that the habeas filing is due for a response on March 16.

As Judge Naslow promised the bond would be uploaded before 1pm CT, supporters now wait in anticipation for either Kordia's release or another DHS filing keeping her confined.

Several family and community members, including the mayor of her hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, have signed sworn declarations that they would ensure Kordia attend subsequent hearings once she's freed. Sherman-Stokes also stressed the importance of Kordia's release, citing "neurological and cardiac abnormalities" that could result in Leqaa's immediate death following her diagnosis of malnutrition and sleep deprivation.

Kordia's arrest was related to the expiration of her student visa, as she mistakenly thought a pending family green card nullified the expiration in the interim between the two – a disruptive but normally inconsequential misconception that could be remedied through cooperation with DHS.

Under any other administration's DHS, Kordia's team argues she would have been likely to legally manage her mistake from the comfort of her home in New Jersey. But under Donald Trump, DHS has targeted Kordia for both her Palestinian identity and her activism, keeping her detained thousands of miles from her family at Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas.

As her health has deteriorated, Kordia's story has gained significant traction in the fight for her release, with public support bolstered by the likes of New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, fellow Columbia protester Mahmoud Khalil, and now U.S. Representative and the only Palestinian-American in Congress, Rep. Rashida Tlaib.

Last Friday, Rep. Tlaib scheduled to visit Kordia after reading news reports of her seizure. Despite her team scheduling the visit through proper channels with DHS, detention center staff were not expecting Tlaib.

"I came to see Leqaa, but when I walked in – and the way they handled me coming in to see and do a visitation – I was like, 'No, I want to do a tour. And that's why I ended up spending over four hours in there,'" Rep. Tlaib told *Mondoweiss*.

Rep. Tlaib provided an exclusive interview to *Mondoweiss* regarding her visit, explaining that she fears for Kordia's life in detention as she suffers through malnutrition.

"I'm afraid she's going to die in there. I'm very upset that she [has to] keep filing grievances, and she's obviously become an advocate inside that chamber, inside the ICE warehouse," Rep. Tlaib said. "She's worried about everybody else. But I'm really worried. She didn't look good. She looked very pale."

Meanwhile, the campus where she was arrested for protesting genocide almost two years ago has not forgotten Kordia. In the wake of her seizure and in anticipation of her first-year anniversary, Barnard and Columbia students and faculty started a relay hunger strike on March 9. The strike was, in-part, launched by faculty already organizing a weekly vigil in honor of detained community members, including Kordia.

"The idea is really solidarity fasting for her observing Ramadan, or trying to observe as best as she can," Shayoni Mitra, a Barnard faculty member helping organize the strike said. "Also, we have the option of fasting in the evening. I think the idea really is to have some form of embodied solidarity with Leqaa."

Protesters have been posted at 116th and Broadway while tabling and raising awareness of Kordia's case 24 hours a day. Around 25 people total have participated in the strike thus far according to Hunger Strike for Leqaa, and more people from across backgrounds learn about her case every day. At the time of publishing, the strike was in its 95th hour.

Mahmoud Khalil, the first Columbia protester to be detained, came out to support both the 45th consecutive week of the vigil and the launch of the hunger strike, as covered by campus publication, *The Columbia Inspector*.

"I think that this has really galvanized folks," Jackie, a former professor at Barnard participating in the protest said. "There was already a lot of talk about doing something to mark Mahmoud Khalil's one year of kidnapping. And from that sprung this idea of, 'Hey, this is the perfect time to talk about the one person who is already still in detention, and sort of accelerate the momentum to demand her release.'"

Lauren, a student protester and junior in the philosophy department, spoke about how the most recent protest movement for Palestine at the end of 2023 – and the institutional response – has shaped that class's experience at Columbia.

"[The encampment protest] was my freshman spring. And the thing about Columbia freshmen is they live on campus, so they were right in the middle of everything that was happening," Lauren said. "And so, I think that really shaped my experience. Because that was the first year, then there was the second year, all this repression and backlash, and now we're in the third year of it, trying to undo that repression."

As protesters are tabling to inform the public of Kordia's year of detention, photos of her with additional materials are laid out, as well as supplies and signage encouraging members of the public to write letters. One photo displayed that is often shared online, Kordia holding a Palestinian flag at the front gates of Columbia, was taken less than 30 feet from the location of the hunger strike. One called the stretch from Amsterdam to 116th street "a palace of memories, many of them nightmarish," for protesters.

Community members from all walks of life have stopped to write letters for Kordia. And while protesters are often passed by onlookers, many have taken time to learn about Kordia's case and show support.

"We're going to write a letter," a resident of the area visiting the installation with his daughter said after observing the table for a few moments. He took a pencil and paper and began writing. His daughter, around 12 years old, watched quietly before he invited her to write one as well.

"I don't know what to write," his daughter said.

"Just tell her we're praying for her, to stay strong, and she's got this," the resident answered.

In the wake of the judge's decision, Kordia's supporters still await her potential release, with an answer not expected until Monday. In a public statement following the hearing, Leqaa Kordia said:

"I'm deeply grateful for all the people who attended today's bond hearing on the one-year mark of my detention. I'm very, very proud of my community, family, and friends who have been speaking out for my freedom since day one. To see so many people during the hearing today made me feel loved and supported, and it made me confident that freedom is near. All I want is for the government to finally release me now so I can go home to my family. Until then, I'll continue speaking up for the basic rights and freedom of all people, from Texas to Palestine."

22 Mar - Prairieland: Solidarity with Defendants

WHAT: Benefit

WHEN: 7:00pm, Sunday, March 22nd

WHERE: Mayday Space - 176 Saint Nicholas Avenue, Brooklyn

COST: \$10

MORE:

Anti-ICE demonstrators are on trial (or have recently been convicted). This is a benefit show and letter-writing event all rolled into one. Bands include No Knock, Continuity of Struggle (with Seth Tobocman), Watchlist, and End State. All funds will go to the DFW Support Committee.