



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for September 17th

2 Sept - Making music to crack open prisons

Chicago band Glutton for Insurrection play to summon an anarchist future where everyone is free from capitalism and the carceral state.

MORE:

by Micco Caporale (*Chicago Reader*)

Glutton for Insurrection don't have much in common with other goth synthwave projects. Their lyrics are aggressively political, with no hint of romanticism. In the group's four-year lifespan, they've performed only about a dozen times, exclusively at generator gigs and political benefits. What started as a creative outlet during COVID lockdown has become an exercise in resistance aesthetics by four masked performers demanding the impossible: total freedom without permission.

As the band tell it, they're four prisoners from a not-too-distant future who've broken out of jail and time traveled to the present to stop the climate apocalypse and the rise of fascism before it's too late. In actuality, Glutton for Insurrection started as a pandemic bedroom project by the group's founding member, who goes by Grog. They're a formerly incarcerated person employed as a bartender, and along with most other service workers, they were furloughed during much of lockdown—and as businesses reopened, they were among the first to return to work, COVID be damned.

Many of their friends, because they were frontline employees, lost their livelihoods or fell ill and couldn't work. Less than a month before the George Floyd uprisings, Grog uploaded eight tracks of eight-bit anarchist aggression to Bandcamp, including "V!RU\$ 5TR!K3," which describes their anger about being forced to risk their health to keep the wheels of capital turning.

As Chicago inched back toward normalcy after lockdown, members of the city's DIY punk scene hosted small mask-required generator shows at out-of-the-way outdoor locations, especially on the south side. Grog performed the first Glutton for Insurrection set at one of these shows. Since then, the group's roster has expanded and contracted; it currently includes Grog on vocals and guitar, Gramps on drums, Grub on keyboards and synths, and Grievance on bass and vocals.

Each of the four members is a longtime political organizer as well as a veteran of the south-side punk scene, and the *Reader* is using their stage names at their request, to avoid potentially enabling state surveillance and retaliation. Glutton for Insurrection cite Sin Orden and Los Crudos as primary inspirations, and they frequently revisit YouTube footage of Los Crudos playing a guerrilla set at Daley Plaza in 1993 to remind themselves of what's possible.

"We don't even think of them as shows," Grog says. "We're actually casting spells and creating interventions—public spectacles which could be atomized and, like, resubjectify our relationship to the physical space around us."

Since 2022, one place you can count on catching Glutton for Insurrection is at the Chicago iteration of Running Down the Walls. This noncompetitive 5k run/jog/walk/roll is organized each fall by local chapters of the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, a group that provides legal and financial support to political prisoners and prisoners of war. Launched in 1999, Running Down the Walls raises awareness and generates funds for specific prisoners vetted by ABCF's Warchest Program. It's held outside jails across the country, usually with bands and DJs joining in. People inside often run or walk in solidarity, inviting curiosity from fellow inmates in hopes of raising their political consciousness.

“When we play a show in front of the jail, we are participating in public culture,” Grievance explains. “We are trying to share the music with folks that are inside. But we’re also trying to literally let the ground just start to shake and open, and the prison doors will burst open, and everyone will be freed.”

Like Grog, Grievance has served time in prison. Between the two of them, they’ve spent more than a decade behind bars on charges related to their activism. Listening to and making music have always been big parts of their lives, but while locked up they’ve found it difficult to do either. Many prisons are located in remote areas reached by fewer radio stations. Some commissaries sell only hand-cranked radios to pick up the signal, Grog and Grievance say, and they often break in less than a year.

Many facilities offer MP3 players for purchase, but those devices aren’t necessarily more reliable—their warranty coverage usually lasts 90 days or less. In a 2013 article for Spin, one inmate likened them to clunky “run-of-the-mill plastic ones for kids” and said he’d had to replace his MP3 player twice because they break so easily.

The devices also have vastly restricted features, including time limits on how long and how many times someone can browse the purchase library per day. Songs often cost as much as \$1.85 apiece, which is clear price gouging compared to downloads from Amazon or iTunes—and in 2017, an inmate’s average pay for a regular prison job ranged from \$0.86 to \$3.45 per day before fees and deductions (a decline since 2001). Song options are limited to radio-friendly edits, and listening privileges can be restricted by guards. If people want to keep their player after release, they have to pay an additional fee.

“Prisons are a sandbox for the shittiest moneymaking schemes by the copyright industry,” Grog says.

Only medium- and minimum-security facilities even have the option to hold any sort of music programming, and many of those don’t bother. Grog, a loud atheist who’d been playing guitar since they were a teenager, talked their way into a church band just to keep making any kind of music. When Grievance got locked up, Grog would mail them guitar tabs so Grievance could teach themselves to play. Grievance could borrow musical equipment occasionally but says it took a lot of sucking up and good behavior to earn the privilege. And when instruments broke, they weren’t replaced. Prisons also don’t make allowances for music recording of any kind.

Restricting access to music not only erodes the individual’s sense of subcultural identity and connection to the outside world but also limits inmates’ ability to process their experiences and express their creativity. Marx would call this a denial of one’s fundamental human capacity. Glutton for Insurrection call it bullshit.

Before performing at Running Down the Walls, members of Glutton for Insurrection work with inmate contacts inside to circulate a number that incarcerated people can call during the event. This way, they can request songs from DJs, and if someone holds the phone to a megaphone or connects it to a loudspeaker, a prisoner can even talk to the audience. People also read letters from inmates aloud onstage.

This year’s Chicago event is at the Metropolitan Correctional Center downtown, and it’s previously been held at Cook County Jail near 26th and California. For a few hours every fall, the liminal space between freedom and bondage becomes an autonomous zone centering the needs and experiences of those behind bars that’s filled with food, zines, banners, and lots of music. No gods, no masters, no permits. Just vibes.

This approach is important to the group for a few reasons. “We’re not particularly interested in playing venues and generator shows with permits because they start to feel more established and less adventuresome and fun,” Grog says, “and frankly, less of a danger or threat to the established order, which is what we’re fighting against.” They also see claiming space as its own act of protest.

Glutton for Insurrection describe performing at a rave at the Damen Silos on the South Branch of the Chicago River, emphasizing the site’s history as a guerrilla show space. They hope it endures, but in 2022,

it was purchased by a developer who intends to demolish the structures despite environmental concerns raised by local residents. Because the silos sit at the intersection of five neighborhoods, the band fear that a demolition could cause an ecological catastrophe in McKinley Park, Pilsen, Bridgeport, Chinatown, and Little Village—similar to the harm done to Little Village in 2020 by the razing of the Crawford Coal Plant.

In April, the city reached a \$12.25 million settlement with Little Village residents, but that's only \$317 per person in the plaintiff class. And according to a 2023 Guardian analysis, Chicago's south and west sides have the third-worst fine-particle air pollution in the country. Glutton for Insurrection don't just see using the silos as a way to claim space for freedom of movement and expression; they also see defending the structures as a way to seek justice for a neighborhood that's been subject to vicious environmental racism.

This is one of many ways Glutton for Insurrection enact their politics—it goes beyond just lyrics. Their sound, visuals, and approach draw on many influences. The band embrace a goth aesthetic because that subculture reckons with death.

“Death is a dish served daily by this fascist regime,” Grog says. “This government has always been on an imperialist, colonialist death trip. We’re talking about a genocidal administration committing mass death currently in Palestine, but we see it all over this culture.”

The band love a video-game sound because they're all gaming nerds with their own cyberpunk interests and dystopian fantasies. They use costumes and theatrics because it's fun and anonymizing and also rooted in a history of radical street theater, such as Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theater and the diffuse global collective Reclaim the Streets. During shows, they often burn flags or use a fake guillotine to behead effigies of cops. At one event, members dressed like Supreme Court justices and played their instruments with papier-mâché gavels while saying a lot of things that added up to “fuck SCOTUS.”

Glutton for Insurrection want to build on the legacy of other bands working to expand what playing shows can mean. They mention Hemorage, a San Francisco thrash-metal group who've refitted a minibus as a rolling stage so they could play impromptu sets whenever and wherever, and Atari Teenage Riot, a 90s techno-punk act that formed in response to Berlin's neo-Nazi subculture and openly clashed with fascists.

But Glutton for Insurrection don't consider it important that they build an audience. They don't care if you come to their shows, and they don't care if you like their sound. They want to inspire more people—even people who hate their band—to make a culture outside of commerce. They want a world where underground organizers can set their own age limits for shows, no one has to buy alcohol or merch to feel like they're participating, and anyone can be entertained regardless of their financial situation. Glutton for Insurrection believe punk should be an all-out menace to imperialism and cultural hegemony. Musical performance can be combat.

3 Sept - A Message From Casey Goonan

The following is a message from Casey Googan, currently pre-trial. After that, a couple of solidarity statements with Casey.

MORE:

Thank you to everyone sending letters, zines, news articles, and books. Casey is grateful for the support and feels protected with so many friendly eyes on this systematically coercive and neglectful facility.

They hit the limit of books they can have stored with them. So please refrain from sending any more books at this time. Please keep sending zines, newsletters, and information on current events.

They especially need as much up to date info on the past 2 months (and ongoing) Student/Campus movements for Palestine, the prisoner movement, and international revolt and movements. They also love all the letters and have been stacking envelopes and paper to quickly and consistently write back.

The only thing they can't accept more of temporarily is books. Thank you for the love + support.

August 25th - Hybachi LeMar

My name is Hybachi LeMar and I'm a member of the Black Autonomy Federation Chicago Local Organizing Committee. I'm sending this message to support the release of scholar activist dedicated community organizer and friend Casey Goonan.

When I was houseless, he let me eat and sleep in his home. Each morning we asked each other, "What's your positive affirmation for the day?" We take a meaningful moment before sharing a positive truth, both of us knowing it's significance in our lives when we internalize it as an instrument of our liberation. More often than not, for the years I've known Casey, he's neglecting his own needs to prioritize those of others, has led me to ask him instinctively, if he's taken his meds yet. And I've lost count how many times he thanked me for reminding him before asking if I remembered to take mine too.

With barely anything in his pocket, I watched him fill a perfect stranger's diabetic medication prescription. He's loved, and I don't mean by me, but by street walkers and other commoners throughout Chicago.

He's organized fundraisers in one particular area of the city on several occasions. We'd pass out \$20 bills he prefilled in envelopes, for every single houseless person on the street, or asking for change. From one corner to the next, up one gentrified block and up another, not letting him know the contents, or lingering around for thanks; often with the clenched fist of unity and a solidarity smile.

It was heartwarming to hand out gloves, masks, hygiene supplies like cases of hand sanitizer, chips, and other community needs for free, under the el train one blistering winter amidst the pandemic from a makeshift warming center he'd open each weekend. A smile on people's faces glow from appreciation, from those of us who know him, to the newcomers asking 'And this is for free?' when glancing at the fold-out tables, not far from the turnstile.

"Mm-hmm! Yep! Help yourself," Casey responds, wishing them a good day and to take care, which is substantial to folks rendered socio-economically invisible in the city.

Free, the root word in freedom, has been top priority as an agenda item for Casey from dusk til dawn every day of every year that I've known him.

He likes to remind everyone how special we are in this world, by showing how easy and necessary it is to care for each other, and to help a world that could certainly use it, offering a space and a table of togetherness, and free education.

As a publisher, he provides an invaluable resource for writers. With freedom inspired by billions of us, it speaks not only to our conscious, but to our collective benefit to know we're substantially freer in this world with him inside it. We, particularly poor folk throughout the city, appreciate him.

The socio-economically engineered gentrification spiraling genocide by poverty in Chicago's northside has been as politically protracted as an alienated southside housing he helped me leaflet. His spirit of spending his last to buy insulin for the diabetic outside the electric doors at Walgreens is the same one alive in the Holy Land 5 that sends medicine and food supplies to orphans in Palestine.

Casey Goonan is a walking model of our aspired-after ideals as Human Beings. A genuine listener, whose aura is evident in the integrity of compassion. His ideals against genocide are shared by me and each of us around the globe who envision a world released from its grip.

Free Casey Goonan! Free Jack Mazurek! Free the Cop City 61! Drop the charges against the Merrimack 4 and the Mountain Valley pipeline defenders! Free the Holy Land Foundation 5! Free Leonard Peltier! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free Cletus C Rivera! Free them all!

August 26th - Stevie Wilson

Many years ago, while imprisoned at SCI-Smithfield, and struggling to keep our study groups afloat, I received an e-message from Casey Goonan. I had no clue whom he was. He said he reached out because he heard about the work I was doing inside and wanted to offer any assistance he could. He did, and he continued to do so. Casey has been one of the most consistent and ready allies/accomplices of imprisoned people. Whether producing zines that center imprisoned voices, mailing zines to imprisoned people at no cost, coordinating phone zaps to combat repression by prison officials, raising funds for mutual aid, building social media presence for imprisoned folk or just lending an attentive ear to the concerns of imprisoned people, Casey has been unstinting in his support of anyone, anywhere, who is being oppressed.

My friend, my comrade, my brother, is currently being held in a county jail in CA. I wish I were out there to do more for him, to manifest by love and solidarity for him. What I want everyone to know is that Casey Goonan is an amazing ally/accomplice of oppressed people everywhere. In this, his time of need, he should be supported and cared for. I ask people to keep close tabs on the situation, show up for Casey and make sure that while he is inside, jail officials do not harm him or exacerbate his condition. I don't ever claim to speak for all imprisoned people, but I feel confident in saying that thousands of imprisoned people across this land have benefited from Casey's efforts. We ask you support our comrade and care for him.

3 Sept - United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Visits Leonard Peltier in Prison

On Tuesday, August 27, 2024, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, visited Leonard Peltier at USP Coleman I Federal Penitentiary in Florida.

MORE:

This humanitarian visit, which lasted two and a half hours, allowed the Rapporteur to hear from Leonard directly regarding his health condition and the circumstances of his imprisonment.

At the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 22nd Session, the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) Board President Ron Lameman presented a request to the Special Rapporteur on behalf of Lenny Foster, Leonard Peltier's Spiritual Advisor and IITC Board member, to visit Leonard Peltier in prison, observe his health condition, and make recommendations for a humane outcome. The request was also presented by IITC to the United States State Department to officially allow and facilitate the Rapporteur to carry out this visit.

The International Indian Treaty Council has worked tirelessly on Leonard Peltier's behalf for over four decades. They understand the ongoing violations of Leonard's human rights on a profound level, which they have presented in various UN bodies, and are gravely concerned about his rapidly deteriorating health. The IITC has joined with many others to call on the US to grant him humanitarian release, citing his long sentence, advanced age, and poor health.

The Special Rapporteur's visit, a culmination of the International Indian Treaty Council's resolute efforts, holds significant potential. Leonard requested that the Special Rapporteur recommend an emergency medical transfer to a facility such as the Federal Medical Center in Rochester Minnesota. Doing so could be a pivotal point for the treatment of his chronic and severe medical conditions, which independent medical experts have concluded cannot be adequately addressed by medical personnel at USP Coleman I.

Mr. Peltier is honored by the visit and enjoyed his time with Francisco Cali Tzay and Seanna Howard from the University of Arizona, who assisted the Special Rapporteur Tzay on this visit. In 2022, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released a 17-page report condemning Leonard Peltier's

arbitrary detention. The report cited numerous factors, including an anti-Native American bias in the ongoing denials of parole for Leonard Peltier. To date, the United States has not responded.

Leonard Peltier is currently subjected to Death by Incarceration (DBI) by the United States government. We call on all supporters to demand an emergency medical transfer, in addition to his immediate release by the United States Parole Commission, judicial means, or executive clemency.

4 Sept - Running Down the Walls Statements

This year, several of our imprisoned comrades wrote statements for the international Running Down the Walls. We're including a bunch below. Some are excerpted for brevity.

MORE:

TOBY SHONE

I'll be joining the 5km Running Down the Walls event in September that is organized by our comrades across the Atlantic in the United States. This initiative is another date in the calendar that can help build a revolutionary narrative that prisoners and those outside can participate in together. It promotes physical training and fitness with a mindset of solidarity in struggle. These kinds of events give us strength and development. A huge shout out to all those taking part. I write this during the International Week of Solidarity for Anarchist Prisoners, in combative memory of the state murders of Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston 1927. P.S. A greeting also to the rebel prisoners in Italy, I heard of the revolts even here.

JESSE CANNON (TALL CAN)

Running is a form of meditation for me, while trying to nail a 9-minute mile I find myself at peace, watching the gravel track under my feet like the surroundings of a locomotive. I reminisce of watching friends train for peace and dignity run and run for salmon. Long distance running is an indigenous tradition. I run with you today and every day in solidarity with all political prisoners and prisoners of war. I stand with all and with indigenous people everywhere fighting for their ancestral sights and rights and land back. Today I pray to creator I will be joining you all next time in person to run alongside y'all. Keep up the fight, break down borders push and run down the walls!! Stay up. Stay Dangerous!

MARIUS MASON

We are a small community of queer, transgender and non-binary prisoners here at FMC Fort Worth, and so we recognize the necessity and power in solidarity. As a marginalized faction of an already disenfranchised population, we suffer an added layer of discrimination within the prison system. We can't get certain jobs, or live in certain Units or eat with certain other prisoners.....we are often mocked by both other prisoners and staff for our orientation or gender. This could be suffocating – but we find our voices in supporting each other. We are glad to walk today with our free sisters, brothers and siblings to celebrate our connection and to dream together of a future where no one is incarcerated and all are free. To paraphrase the astronaut's famous phrase: one small step for any one person, but one giant step for all of us together...until ALL are free! Thank you for your solidarity and support, towards an end to cages.

XINACHTLI

As a long-time recipient of economic support from the WARCHEST FUND of the ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS FEDERATION (ABCF), let me extend my gratitude for your persistent support and let you know that I have appreciated your consistent support down through many years of struggle, given the circumstances. Texas prison does not compensate prisoners for their slave labor, and, even if it did, I would never participate in contributing prisoner labor to a slavery institution with deep roots in white settler colonialism, white supremacy and the African slave trade...

We encourage [the] ABCF to continue to lead the way, support its political prisoners, as well as all oppressed and colonized nations domestically and around the world, as the Nobel and generous work done in collecting monies to support the Palestinian masses in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip...LET OTHER SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS PAY HEED TO YOUR INSPIRING ABCF WORK AND

YOUR PERSISTENCE BY WAY OF SHOWING THE WAY TOWARD OUR FREEDOM BY EXAMPLE.

OSO BLANCO

Sisters and Brothers and all beings we love and fight for. I Oso Blanco thank you so much for coming out this year. I love you all and cannot make it without you all as a whole. For one is never bigger than the whole of everyone. We must acknowledge that. Run down these walls! RUN THEM DOWN TO DUST! It has never been worse inside these prisons. We must run down these walls and free all life. We must reach deep down within and hit the internal switch. The switch of power in our sacred heart realm. We must activate the warrior of fire inside of us all. Things on the inside of federal prisons have gotten much worse in the last year. The system is broken and they nearly starve us much of the time. We are always on the hunt for food. And we are suffering a much higher pattern of violence against prisoners by staff. Things are more serious than ever and I have close to 30 years in federal prisons. This is my second case that's federal, so I've seen the extreme decline in federal prisons. It's time to really truly rise up and run down all walls forever. It's time to put in the real and serious work action.

5 Sept - Columbia Welcomes Students Back to Campus With Arrests

Two students, including one activist with Columbia University Apartheid Divest, were arrested in front of campus.

MORE:

by Jonah Valdez (*The Intercept*)

Columbia University's school year began this week with New York Police Department officers arresting two students in front of campus at a pro-Palestine demonstration.

At the rally on Tuesday, dozens of students marched along a metal barricade in front of the Morningside campus, continuing their calls from the prior year for the school to divest from companies with ties to Israel amid the country's war in Gaza and continued occupation of the West Bank — the same cause that drove the encampments and occupation of Hamilton Hall in the spring.

The NYPD said officers arrested two 21-year-old protesters who were held on suspicion of misdemeanors: obstructing governmental administration, disorderly conduct, attempted obstruction, and attempted disorderly conduct. Both were later released with tickets ordering their appearance to court.

The Intercept independently confirmed that both arrested protesters were students of the university. Among those arrested was an organizer with Columbia University Apartheid Divest, which previously led negotiations with administrators over possible economic divestment and academic boycotts, which the school ultimately rejected in April.

The Columbia chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine said on social media that NYPD officers “were extremely aggressive with students, shoving protestors against the barricades” and claimed “excessive force” was used against a student. One video shared on Instagram showed a scuffle between officers and students, resulting in one student to fall over onto the pavement. Organizers claimed administrators had called on the NYPD to make the arrests.

An NYPD spokesperson told *The Intercept* that officers were aware of the planned protest before it began. It was unclear whether the school had notified police of the demonstration.

Columbia declined to comment on the student arrests, citing the fact that they occurred off-campus — by a few feet — and instead referred to the NYPD.

Earlier on Tuesday, a bucket of red paint had been splashed on the school's Alma Mater statue. The paint was cleaned later that afternoon.

A separate demonstration took place on Wednesday as a group of students held a sit-in at the School of International and Public Affairs protesting against a class taught there by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Organizers called Clinton a “war criminal,” citing her record in the Middle East, including arms deals to Saudi Arabia amid its brutal bombing campaign of Yemen in 2015 and 2016, during which more than 19,000 civilians have been killed, prompting war crime allegations. The group of 20 to 30 students sat in the building’s lobby, holding signs that read “Long Live Hind’s Hall” and “There Are No Universities Left in Gaza,” then left after two hours.

A Columbia spokesperson said the university had “followed its response protocols as planned regarding protests” and that two school delegates were there and spoke with demonstrators. The school said Clinton’s class began on time and ended without disruption.

The brief sit-in was perhaps the first demonstration on campus of the school year and the university’s first test of its new guidelines around protests on campus.

Across the U.S., schools have prepared for the start of class with additional measures to curb protest. The University of California system banned encampments, blocking walkways and face coverings on its campuses amid pressure from the state legislature. At the University of Michigan, administrators passed new rules around student misconduct complaints, drawing free speech concerns from the American Civil Liberties Union. And New York University updated its student code of conduct to make speaking out against Zionism a potential violation of the school’s nondiscrimination policies.

Additional measures to curb protests have been put in place at Columbia as well. Access to campus is limited to people with school IDs or prearranged permission. Photos shared on social media showed fencing surrounding more of the campus green spaces, similar to the University of Pennsylvania.

But unlike other major universities that faced student protest last year, Columbia faculty, administrators, and students decided to double down on the existing rulebook.

Members of the rules committee of Columbia’s University Senate — which is made up of faculty, administrators, and students — spent the summer updating its guidelines. The new guidelines do not change the rules but are intended to clarify their interpretation, addressing where and how protests can take place, what speech and actions constitute harassment, and how to sanction students who violate the rules.

Students who were arrested on suspicion of taking part in encampments or the Hamilton Hall occupation in the spring continue to face possible discipline, including expulsion, and the University Senate has criticized school administrators for their handling of those cases, calling out cases where the university violated its own rules on sanctions or due process.

The school has also been the target of the Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce, which recently subpoenaed Columbia for records related to the protests, including communication among administrators in handling of encampments, meeting minutes from the board of trustees, and documentation of alleged antisemitic incidents on campus. The committee repeatedly accuses the school of not punishing students severely enough in public statements.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations on Thursday sent a letter to Columbia, decrying the subpoena as an attempt to chill student’s free speech and called on the school to “not give in” to the House committee’s McCarthy-ist efforts to target students. They warned turning over student records would expose the school to liability. Gadeir Abbas, an attorney representing CAIR, said the subpoena is an attempt to force “the disclosure of the names of pro-Palestinian students at the school.”

“The House Committee’s subpoena is a violation of the First Amendment, and Columbia University will become an accomplice to the violation to the extent it complies,” said Abbas in a statement.

Student groups such as Columbia University Apartheid Divest and Students for Justice in Palestine, which had their Instagram account permanently banned amid Meta's crackdown on the use of the term "Zionist," vowed to continue to protest throughout the school year.

"It's back to school season in both Gaza and in New York — but while we are privileged enough to move into our dorms ready for the new school year, 715,000 Gazan children receive their education in the form of airstrikes," read a statement from Columbia University Apartheid Divest posted online prior to Tuesday's demonstration. "The bombs falling on the heads of our people in Gaza are not just American-made. Their very production is facilitated by Columbia University's investments in the war machine."

The group listed companies Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Caterpillar Inc., and General Electric as corporations with direct ties to both Columbia's endowment and Israel. They also point out that certain members of the school's board of trustees, which controls its endowment, sit on the boards of Lockheed Martin, BlackRock, and Heico, which all conduct business with the Israeli government and military.

5 Sept - A controversial Ohio law is helping prosecute the Boeing Five

After protesters were arrested in March for blocking access to a Boeing facility in Ohio, prosecutors are leaning heavily on Marsy's Law, which gives extensive rights to alleged victims

MORE:

by C. Frances (*Prism Reports*)

In Ohio, the mornings in March are cold. They're even colder when you're hanging off of a bridge.

This was the position some activists took up on the morning of March 11, when workers began to arrive at the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center in Heath, Ohio, only to find that pro-Palestine protesters blocked all access points to the facility. Protesters had deployed three separate blockades on each of the facility's access roads. They blocked two overpasses using a cantilever system involving weighted blockades with protesters hanging from ropes below. Other protesters locked themselves to a stationary car.

Multiple contractors operate out of the manufacturing center, but the activists' primary target was the Boeing Guidance Repair Center, which builds missile guidance systems, aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles at the Ohio facility. In recent months, Boeing has come under intense scrutiny by activists for their partnership and supply of weapons to Israeli occupation forces in Gaza.

After an intense and frightening day for the activists, police arrested five individuals in and around the blockades. Initially, the activists, who have come to be known regionally as the "Boeing Five," were charged with a variety of offenses, including felony charges of obstruction of a business and failure to comply with a police order. Since then, the felony charges have been amended, and the activists now face multiple misdemeanors each.

However, in the months since their arrests, their paths forward have been anything but clear. Prosecutors in Licking County, Ohio, have leaned heavily on Marsy's Law, a controversial statute that grants extensive rights to alleged victims of crimes, which, in this case, prosecutors have deemed as Boeing and the other companies operating out of the targeted facility. Now, activists told *Prism*, they are concerned that the law is being used to repress and punish those organizing for Palestinian liberation.

"The reason why they're being stiffer on sentencing is because of the restitution amounts these companies have come out with in the Marsy's Law victimhood process," said Seth, one of the accused activists whose last name is omitted for privacy.

Under Marsy's Law, which was passed through a ballot initiative in 2017, alleged crime victims are entitled to be present at proceedings, to be notified when accused individuals are released, and crucially, it

allows for victims to provide input on plea deals offered to the accused. Additionally, the law entitles victims to receive restitution as a result of financial losses they may have suffered. However, civil rights advocates in Ohio have sharply criticized the initiative, which they say bolsters the power of the state. Prior to the passing of the law in 2017, the ACLU of Ohio released a statement arguing against the provision, which it said threatened “fundamental rights” and would result in “longer prison sentences and higher incarceration rates” as well as depriving the accused of constitutional rights.

In Licking County, the prosecutor for the Boeing Five case identified Boeing and all of the other companies at the Aerospace Center as “victims,” entitling them to the full range of powers dictated under Marsy’s Law. As a result, protesters said that they have had to face many layers of additional scrutiny.

Following the Boeing Five arrests, Boeing and other companies at the facility requested \$300,000 in restitution from the activists. Later in the process, as part of ongoing plea negotiations, weapons manufacturers stipulated that they wanted social media posts of the protest removed as a condition of the defendants’ plea deals. Defendants also believe that prosecutors in Licking County are facing pressure from aerospace companies to amend their current misdemeanor charges back into felony-level prosecutions.

The Licking County Prosecutor’s office did not immediately respond to *Prism*’s request for comment.

Prince Shakur, a community organizer and activist coordinating legal support for the Boeing Five, said the harsh legal penalties the activists are facing are part of the wider national crackdown on activists organizing for Palestinian liberation.

“I view this as a multi-pronged attack on pro-Palestine movements,” he said. For activists, the connections between state prosecutors and private companies can have broad implications. “I think there’s layers to how repression is showing up and how these companies are kind of involved or encouraging police to sow more terror and resort to more surveillance as well.”

Boeing has a long history with Israel and has been supplying weapons to the nation’s military since 1948. Following Hamas’ offensive on Oct. 7, Boeing fast-tracked the delivery of more than 1,000 bombs to be used in Israel’s continuous air strikes on Gaza. Since October, Gaza’s Health Ministry estimates that more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces, many of them civilians killed in aerial bombings. Boeing did not immediately respond to *Prism*’s request for comment.

Police, fire, and emergency medical service teams had to work in tandem to remove the activists from their blockades and to arrest the protesters. For Joel Atkinson, who was locked to the interior of the fortified car, the experience was tense.

“They used jaws of life to remove the entire top of the vehicle while we were locked to it,” he said. “I definitely had anxiety around getting my arm injured. But one of the things that helped me through the experience was thinking about, in comparison, the things that Palestinians have had to endure.”

Other activists, including Seth, who was suspended from a bridge, claim law enforcement’s response put their safety at risk. “Two or three times an emergency vehicle almost hit the rope I was connected to,” they said, adding that additional supporters were arrested trying to prevent law enforcement from damaging the blockade’s safety infrastructure. “People literally had to jump in front of a police car,” said Seth. The Heath Police Department did not immediately respond to *Prism*’s request for comment.

Prosecutors in Licking County previously rejected plea proposals from the defense teams of the five anti-Boeing activists. In their most recent round of negotiations, the state agreed to drop the request for restitution but is still seeking a jail sentence of up to 30 days for the activists. At this point, it is unclear if any of the arrested protesters will be able to reach an agreement with the state ahead of their scheduled trial dates in early September.

However, Atkinson, who has been awaiting trial since the car blockade, hopes that the legal battle of the Boeing Five will demonstrate that the pressure exerted by protesters is working and that it will further mobilize activists in the U.S. to organize against the companies enabling the genocide in Gaza. “They’re going to use any tool at their disposal to try to silence people speaking up for the rights of Palestinians, but I don’t think that it’s going to work ... I’m not intimidated by their tactics because, to me, it’s a sign that a movement has a lot of momentum and that they’re intimidated by us,” he said.

If a plea agreement is not reached, the first of the Boeing Five will head to trial this September.

6 Sept - Update on Stop Cop City Activist Jack

An update from Jack’s support crew.

MORE:

It has now been over six months since Jack was arrested following the raid of his Atlanta home on February 8. He spent nearly two months behind bars—the bulk of this time spent in Fulton County Jail, notorious for its dangerously poor conditions and overcrowding. For weeks, Jack was refused vegetarian meal trays and access to his commissary funds.

Because in-person visits are no longer allowed in any jails in the state of Georgia under the shaky pretense of Covid precautions, Jack was only able to speak with loved ones via heavily surveilled and recorded phone calls. Fortunately, Jack received dozens and dozens of letters from friends and supporters who participated in the many letter-writing and fundraising events that were held across the country following his arrest. He was also able to receive a handful of poetry and history books as well as novels and Spanish language books which were a lifeline for him. Reading, as well as meditation and exercise were key to Jack’s well-being while in jail.

On March 29 Jack finally had a bond hearing, appearing before the Fulton Co. judge via Zoom. Close to 150 supporters logged into the call to show the judge and the prosecutors that Jack is a beloved member of his community. This show of support combined with testimony from several character witnesses proved decisive in the judge’s decision to grant bond under the condition of 24-hour house arrest.

Even under the overly-restrictive measures of house arrest and 24/7 monitoring, Jack has stayed busy. He continues to apply his carpentry skills to improving his house and recently finished a screened-in porch on his property. He continues to practice meditation daily and read. He also enjoys training Muay Thai and Jiu-Jitsu several times a week. He is feeling strong and in good spirits despite the worry and uncertainty that accompany intense political repression.

While we are thrilled that Jack is home, the conditions of his bond remain costly and restrictive. The cash bond amount was set at \$75,000, which was required for his release from jail. Legal fees are steep; \$20,000 has already been spent for representation, and more will be needed as the case progresses.

The most pressing need for Jack right now is fundraising. Funds go toward legal fees as well as living expenses. Continuing to boost and share the fundraising link <givebutter.com/tLAvDE> is helpful, and so is planning fundraiser events like music shows, art shows, raffles, and more.

Jack’s case is one instance of political repression and legal negligence unfolding among a constellation of others right now in Georgia:

- Atlanta Forest RICO defendant Ayla King filed a motion for speedy trial under Georgia’s speedy trial statute. Ayla was entitled to a trial before the end of 2023. Instead, the court picked a jury in December 2023 and trial was delayed until January of this year. Ayla’s motion to dismiss was sent up to the appellate courts to decide if the case will be thrown out under Georgia law.
- Georgia’s other messy RICO case, targeting YSL, has recently been marred by scandal as well. Young Thug’s lawyer found out about an improper meeting the judge had with the prosecution. When the lawyer objected to the judge on the grounds that the judge had a duty to notify defense, the judge got so angry that

he held the lawyer in contempt and sentenced him to jail time. Georgia's Supreme Court reversed the contempt order, and the judge was forced to recuse himself from the case.

- The state of Georgia has embroiled itself in a shameful and scandalous attempt to outlaw legal defense fundraising and has targeted the Atlanta Solidarity Fund. The "Sol Fund 3" defendants filed a motion to dismiss, to disqualify the Attorney General's office from the case, and to disqualify APD and Homeland Security from the case as well. Why? Because the police seized electronics with privileged attorney-client communications and failed to keep those communications confidential. The judge has not yet ruled on the motion but stated at the hearing that the State was guilty of "gross negligence," and told them, "What you're saying to the court is not credible. It flies in the face of any logic."

We understand that Jack is being targeted by the State of Georgia, like so many others, in its flailing and dangerous attempt to abuse the law and criminalize all forms of protest and political activity. We will continue to stand by our friend. We hope that you stand with us.

Jack's case is far from over. His next court date will be September 23, 2024. Stay tuned to hear from Jack's crew about more ways to support our friend.

8 Sept - The Outrageous Case of a Journalist Charged With a Hate Crime

"This appears to be a clear attempt to stifle both journalistic activities and pro-Palestine speech."

MORE:

by Natasha Lennard (*The Intercept*)

In an egregious violation of press freedoms and First Amendment-protected activity, a New York City video journalist was arrested on felony hate crime charges Tuesday for allegedly being present during and documenting a pro-Palestine protest action.

According to the charges, Sam Seligson, a credentialed independent videographer, filmed a small group of people last June graffitiing the homes of the Brooklyn Museum's director, president, and two other museum officials with pro-Palestine, anti-Zionist slogans.

Spray-painted messages and banners hung on the properties accused the museum leaders of complicity in Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. A week prior, the museum had called in police to mass arrest protesters who had assembled inside its building to demand divestment from holdings related to Israel's war.

No one is suggesting that graffitiing private property is legal under New York law. Seligson is not accused of spray-painting or vandalizing any property. He is nonetheless facing charges for criminal mischief enhanced as a felony hate crime; one other person alleged to have driven participants to and from the executives' homes is also facing criminal mischief hate crime charges. The police are still looking for four alleged participants.

That a participant in the graffiti action would face criminal mischief charges comes as no surprise. To categorize the acts as a felony hate crime is, however, itself a troubling overreach.

The home of Brooklyn Museum director, Anne Pasternak, was not targeted because she is Jewish but because of the museum leadership's treatment of Gaza solidarity protesters. The other homes targeted did not belong to Jewish people.

Even those who might disagree with the nature of the tactics cannot reasonably claim that the action was targeting individuals for being Jewish. The targets were the homes of individuals in leadership roles in an institution that has been a site of antiwar protest.

To suggest the Brooklyn Museum's ties to Israel and its military-industrial complex somehow confer Jewish identity on the institution's executives is a particularly offensive version of the common, pernicious conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

The reasons behind it, however, are clear. The hate crime charge is among countless repressive efforts to treat Palestinian solidarity as de facto antisemitic, and thus turn it into de jure antisemitism.

The hate crime enhancement is bad enough. Applying the overreaching hate crime charges to a journalist covering the incident is beyond troubling; it is an outrage. It is not alleged that he participated in the graffiti. He is accused of traveling with the participants and being present to document their activities.

“If he is being charged for being transported by these people to document the event, that’s not a crime, that’s journalism” said Robert Balin, an attorney who has represented photojournalists arrested by the NYPD during the George Floyd uprisings. Balin stressed that it’s possible that more relevant information could emerge to complicate the story, “but if the facts are as they are being portrayed, which is that he did not participate in the underlying events, bringing felony charges against him is very, very concerning.”

At this point, the prosecution has not even proven that Seligson was present, and Seligson and his attorney did not comment on whether he was. But he would hardly be the first video journalist to accompany people engaged in unlawful political or other activities — including graffitiing private property — for documentary purposes.

A law enforcement official who spoke anonymously to The Associated Press conceded that Seligson was “not directly involved in the spray-painting or property damage.” So, there can be little doubt he is being charged just for documenting the act.

According to Seligson’s attorney, Leena Widdi, the criminal complaint against the journalist “does not allege any specific behavior that is attributed to him outside of presence, which is absolutely consistent with his role as a journalist in documenting protests or other activities.”

“The state has not provided any reliable evidence that he was actually there,” Widdi told me. “And even if he were there, they have not made any allegations that he engaged in any activity beyond mere presence.”

Roped Into Hate Crime Charges

There is no law that requires journalists — or any members of the public — to act as police informers should they observe a crime.

On the contrary, there is a particular public interest in ensuring that members of the press can respond to tips and cover stories without fear that they will in turn face prosecution for their continued presence. Indeed, the right to observe and record unlawful conduct without being considered complicit should not only be reserved for journalists.

“This is VERY alarming,” wrote the advocacy group Freedom of the Press Foundation, on X. “Cops and prosecutors have dreamed up plenty of convoluted theories to criminalize journalism.” The organization added that “charging a reporter with a hate crime for documenting news has to be one of the most outrageous yet.”

Seligson’s charges risk a chilling effect on journalistic activity, when even the observation of an unlawful incident by a member of the media exposes that journalist to claims of criminal culpability. Seligson should not be facing charges at all, let alone serious hate crimes charges for covering an action that itself should not be deemed a hate crime.

“This appears to be a clear attempt to stifle both journalistic activities and pro-Palestine speech,” said Widdi, Seligson’s attorney. “The charges necessitate the belief that any support of Israel is necessarily synonymous with Jewishness, which is palpably untrue and extremely dangerous.”

“I don’t think any of the allegations are sufficient to make out a hate crime,” said attorney Moira Meltzer-Cohen, who is representing a person charged with driving the participants. Her client also faces several counts of criminal mischief as felony hate crimes.

Meltzer-Cohen said that she could not speak directly to Seligson’s case, but, as a general point, expressed serious concerns about the possible precedents set if journalists are threatened with prosecution for documenting unlawful activity.

“We have an expectation in this society that you can document unlawful conduct, particularly unlawful political conduct and unlawful aesthetic conduct,” Meltzer-Cohen told me. “I don’t think anyone could have anticipated that this was going to be charged as a hate crime. And I don’t think anyone could have anticipated that someone in a documentary role was going to be roped into these charges.”

The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office said that those facing hate crime charges are accused of “vandalizing these homes and using an inverted red triangle.” That is, using a popular symbol of Palestinian resistance and Arab unity, which is a feature on the Palestinian flag, and a widely recognized symbol of global Palestinian solidarity, almost as common as a watermelon on protest banners. The fact that Hamas’s military wing has also used the symbol in videos to identify Israeli military targets in Gaza — during a genocidal war — since October 7 does not make the symbol an antisemitic one. It is, however, on these spurious grounds that the hate crime charges are based.

“Nobody here was targeted as a result of their membership in a protected class,” Meltzer-Cohen told the *New York Times*.

Police are still reportedly searching for four other participants in the action.

Under the First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and the New York Shield Law, which protects reporters from being forced to reveal confidential sources or materials, professional journalists have no legal obligation to share any information with police or prosecutors about the participants in the events they may cover, even those involving unlawful conduct.

If Seligson’s arrest and perversely overreaching charges are an effort to compel a journalist to share information, the police and prosecutors have already set a pernicious, coercive precedent, whether or not the charges stick.

10 Sept - Germany intends to expel American nuclear resister

On October 31, Germany intends to expel U.S. citizen Dennis DuVall, 82, a resident of Radeberg, Germany, a member of Veterans For Peace, and a nuclear resister against U.S./NATO thermonuclear bombs deployed at Büchel NATO base in Germany.

MORE:

The German expulsion order describes DuVall’s nuclear resistance as a serious threat to security and public order. DuVall believes he has a legal obligation to resist planning and preparation for nuclear war taking place at Büchel NATO base, a violation of international laws and a crime according to the Nuremberg Charter and Principles. “B61-12 nuclear bombs and F35 warplanes at Büchel will push NATO closer to war,” warns DuVall, “and redeploying medium-range missiles in Germany also raises the alarm of a wider European war.”

DuVall invites peace and anti-war/anti-weapons groups and individuals to support his fight to remain in Germany. Write respectful letters of support to Robert Domanja, Amtsleiter, Landratsamt Bautzen Ausländeramt, Bahnhofstrasse 9, 02625, Bautzen, Germany. Please support Dennis’ demand to remove American B61-12 nuclear bombs from Büchel and to stop the stationing of medium-range missiles in Germany.

12 Sept - Join us, as we are in it for the long haul

From the support crew of Peppy and Krystal.

MORE:

As a result of the offer brought by the prosecution in late August, Peppy and Krystal changed their pleas at a hearing on September 10th. Peppy pled guilty to counts 1 (conspiracy) and 2 (obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder); the third count, which carried with it a 10-year mandatory minimum, was dropped. Krystal pled guilty to count 2.

Krystal's plea means she'll be on probation for 3 years but will not serve any jail time. By statute, Peppy's plea carries a 60-month sentence. However, given time served and federal prison guidelines, we estimate that he will serve approximately 24 – 30 months, with the hopes that it will be less than that.

Considering all the personal risks of going to trial, and factoring in the larger political context of the case, Peppy and Krystal arrived at this decision as the least-worst option. We all know the trial wouldn't have been based on the facts of the case so much as what the prosecution can make a jury believe, and it behooves Krystal and Peppy to go this route. They are also aware that their pleas, significantly less than the 10-year mandatory minimum Pep faced for the third count alone, inform precedent for these kinds of charges moving forward. We are extremely grateful to the deep and sustained outpouring of support throughout this ordeal. It's been incredible, but it's also not over. While these developments give us direction, they are just next steps in the process.

There is a Sentencing Hearing scheduled for January 6, 2025. If you're interested in submitting character letters on Pep's behalf, here is all the information on how to do that.

And of course, continued letters to Peppy are so important! – let him know we're still out here and with him every step of the way.

12 Sept - Journalist Sentenced to 14 Days in Jail After Being Attacked at Proud Boy Rally

Statement from the Civil Liberties Defense Center on the sentencing of independent journalist, Alissa Azar.

MORE:

For the first time in Oregon history, a Clackamas County Circuit Court Judge sentenced an independent journalist to 14 days in jail after she was convicted of Riot for reporting on a Proud Boy recruitment event that turned violent on June 18th, 2021. The jury trial concluded with a legally inconsistent jury verdict as a result of numerous errors of law by the State. The case will be appealed.

In a truly dystopian effort, deputy District Attorney Joshua Cutino asked the Court to sentence Ms. Azar, who has no prior convictions, up to 90 days in jail — more than the maximum allowed under the Oregon Sentencing Guidelines — and asked that Ms. Azar's phone and computer be monitored by the State while on probation — conditions that would clearly violate the Freedom of the Press and First Amendment. Similar sentences for Riot in Oregon normally result in community service or deferred prosecutions (diversion agreements). Oregon prosecutors generally dismiss charges against journalists arrested by police on the scene, recognizing that sometimes reporters are swept up in arrests while doing their job, but are not intending to participate in breaking the law.

In the closing arguments at trial, deputy DA Cutino claimed that rather than truthfully reporting on the growing rise of fascist political violence and hate, journalists like Alissa Azar must ignore their professional duties as reporters and instead just “drive on by” undemocratic hate-filled public gatherings of Proud Boys — gatherings where, like the one resulting in Azar's arrest, violent assaults are openly being committed against people who disagree with their troubling views. The prosecutor's suggestion is

especially galling considering that Ms. Azar focuses her reporting on activities of extreme right-wing hate groups. In addition to this outrageous claim, the State of Oregon falsely attempted to create moral and legal equivalency between fascist and anti-fascist groups, claiming they are equally violent and culpable, when studies of the last decade show this to be patently false (Seth G. Jones, 2020). Though the jury found Ms. Azar guilty of Riot and Disorderly Conduct, it was deadlocked on the charge of Unlawful Use of Mace—the actual “violent and tumultuous conduct” required to establish Riot and/or Disorderly conduct. Ms. Azar, after being sprayed with mace, was forced to spray mace in self-defense. This occurred while she was attempting to recover her property that had been stolen by Proud Boys and their affiliates. At sentencing, the Court merged the Disorderly and Riot convictions into a single Riot conviction, as required by law.

In a packed courtroom full of Ms. Azar’s supporters and fellow journalists, Judge Van Rhysellberghe sentenced Ms. Azar to 14 days in jail and 36 months of probation. She was stoic and poised while being immediately led from the courtroom in handcuffs. Before pronouncing the sentence, the judge stated there were several mitigating factors to be considered in Ms. Azar’s sentencing, including the fact that Ms. Azar was seriously injured that day by Proud Boy and convicted violent felon, Gordon Cronk, Jr.; that she had no prior convictions; and that she was involved in extensive community service work. He believed, however, that aggravating factors included her refusal to admit that she was a participant in the riot, and that he believed she had not shown an appropriate amount of empathy for the Clackamette Park Host and others who witnessed the Proud Boy initiated violence. This, despite the fact that the park host testified at trial that Proud Boys were vicious thugs, while the “Antifa” folks looked like “goth kids” in comparison. The park host testified that Proud Boy Daniel Tooze, who is also the Vice Chair of the Clackamas County Republican Party, told her in advance of the event that Proud Boys were amassing to engage in brutal violence against any counter-protestors that showed up that day. Tooze kept his word, as this is exactly what unfolded. The park host ended up being a witness in support of Alissa Azar and her version of events despite being called as a state’s witness.

“This sentence is an unprecedented and chilling punishment for a journalist covering a far-right rally and counter demonstration – even if that demonstration is deemed a riot by responding officers. Ms. Azar intends to appeal her case to the Oregon Court of Appeals.” Said Lauren Regan of Civil Liberties Defense Center, Ms. Azar’s attorney.

During trial, attorney Regan pointed out that in previous eras when fascist thought and violence were clearly on the rise, as they are today, “driving on by” fascist and extreme right violence led to some of the darkest days of genocide and oppression in history. Ms. Regan went on to explain the emboldening effect that turning the other cheek can and will have on fascist and neo-Nazi violent rhetoric and action, particularly in less urban areas. Expert witness Shane Burley, a journalist and author with extensive experience researching and reporting on far-right extremists like the Proud Boys, testified that most journalists wear ballistic gear, and larger media outlets have security personnel accompany journalists when they cover Proud Boy events, because Proud Boys repeatedly target and assault journalists they view as adverse to their cause. Ms. Azar has herself been violently attacked several times by Proud Boys, who also target women, people of color, and people they view as “antifascists.”

Following Ms. Azar’s conviction, she stated, “Justice was not delivered in the Clackamas County courthouse today. This verdict sets a dangerous precedent not just for journalists, but for anyone who wishes to stand up and witness or report on hateful and fascist rhetoric.”

13 Sept - Activists Sentenced for Conspiracy, Avoid FACE Act Charges, in Unprecedented Attack on Pro-Choice Defenders

Report from the Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC) about the recent sentencing of several pro-choice activists in Tampa, Florida.

MORE:

In a deeply troubling move, a federal court today sentenced pro-choice activists Amber Smith-Stewart and Annarella Rivera to 30 days in custody and 60 days of home confinement and Caleb Freestone to 1 year and 1 day in federal prison for Conspiracy, while dismissing two counts under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, 18 U.S.C. §248. This unprecedented use of the FACE Act—originally designed to protect abortion clinics and their employees—has been twisted to prosecute activists protesting so-called crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), which are in many cases religious-run facilities that actively work to manipulate and prevent people from accessing abortions. The crimes these defendants have admitted to and took responsibility for would normally result in a state or municipal court misdemeanor for graffiti. Caleb Freestone’s longer sentence was attributed to minor activism he had been arrested for wheat-pasting flyers on private buildings—the charges were later dismissed but the court punished him for it.

The Federal Judge from the Middle District of Florida, Virginia Hernandez Covington, at one point inconceivably argued that spray painting the outside of a closed fake clinic building was more threatening than fire bombing and causing a fire at an abortion clinic. Judge Hernandez Covington argued that the fear the crisis pregnancy center workers felt was in some way more serious than hurling two molotov cocktails at a legitimate health provider. Lawyer for Amber Smith-Stewart, Lauren Regan pushed back on this statement with the Judge eventually conceding, “They’re both bad.” This colloquy with the Court exposed the clear bias against the reproductive justice activists. Regan provided extensive evidence and argument regarding all of the FACE Act prosecutions and sentences around the country. “These reproductive justice activists are the first pro-choice people to be prosecuted under this statute after pressure was applied to the Department of Justice by Florida politicians. They are also the first to be prosecuted for minor property damage that occurred when there were no patients or workers around. Anti-abortion defendants that firebombed clinics or had repeated violations of blockading patients trying to enter Planned Parenthood Clinics got less punishment than our clients did today.”

In the summer of 2022, Amber Smith-Stewart, Annarella Rivera, and Caleb Freestone spray painted three anti-abortion centers in Central and Southern Florida. The defendants previously admitted to tagging these facilities that Planned Parenthood calls “fake clinics,” with the following messages: “If abortions aren’t safe than niether [sic] are you,” These protests came in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision and were borne out of frustration and grief over the rollback of abortion rights in the United States in the wake of the overturned Roe v. Wade precedent. The defendants were arrested for spray painting messages on fake reproductive health facilities in Florida, which the government argued were “reproductive health service” providers under the FACE Act — a position highly questionable given that, the centers involved in this case should never have been granted the protections of a law meant to safeguard true healthcare providers.

children by working in my chosen field of ob/gyn healthcare. When not working, I’ve spent countless hours escorting patients to and from clinical appointments for their safety and the safety of our workers. Simply put, women’s health and the ability to choose their own path is my passion and calling. I never thought that the act of spray-painting a fake ‘clinic’ would result in the FBI violently raiding my house or that I would become a pawn in the fight for a person’s right to bodily autonomy—something an overwhelming majority of citizens in the United States believe in.”

Smith-Stewart added: “In hindsight, I understand that the slogans we spray painted in 2022 could have been taken as a threat which was not our intent. The real threat here remains the assault by a vocal minority against a person’s right to choose. This is where the real danger lies. The Dobbs decision puts lives at risk. People seek abortions for a multitude of reasons, and the decision to terminate or carry a pregnancy to term should never be made by power brokers in Washington, D.C. In my case, my own life would be at risk if I was subjected to a forced pregnancy.”

The use of the FACE Act to protect CPCs, which often operate with the intention of dissuading or manipulating people from obtaining abortions, is a gross distortion of the law. Defense counsel for Smith-Stewart, Lauren Regan, Director of Litigation and Advocacy at Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC), condemned today’s ruling: “This case marks a dangerous shift in the misuse of the FACE Act, twisting it

from a law designed to protect abortion providers into a tool for punishing those who stand up for reproductive rights. The government's claims are a gross overreach. Using a statute intended to safeguard access to abortion to criminalize protest against anti-abortion centers undermines justice and bodily autonomy. This should alarm anyone who believes in the fight for reproductive freedom."

The sentences handed down today send a chilling message to those standing up for reproductive rights and bodily autonomy but CLDC will have your back and we will continue to support Amber Smith-Stewart, Annarella Rivera, Caleb Freestone, and all those fighting for a better world. Thanks to Michael Maddux, attorney for Caleb Freestone, and Vanessa King, attorney for Annarella Rivera.

19 Sept - ¡A Las Barricades!

WHAT: Music and Presentation

WHEN: 7:00pm, Thursday, September 19th

WHERE: P.I.T. [Property is Theft] - 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

P.I.T. is psyched to have compa Josh Macphee back for a new addition to the New York City Anarchist Book Fair music fest: "¡A Las Barricadas!": 100 Years of Anarchist Music

20-22 Sept - NYC Anarchist Bookfair/Music Fest/Film Festival

WHAT: Bookfair

WHEN: Dates and times vary, see below for link

WHERE: Venues across the boroughs

COST: FREE

MORE:

Go to anarchistbookfair.net for all the details, but here's a loose schedule:

September 20

@P.I.T. (Property is Theft), Brooklyn

Music Festival - 5pm

September 21

@La Plaza Community Garden + @Loisada Center

Anarchist Bookfair - 11am-7pm

AnarkoArtLab Art Festival - 6-7:40pm

In-person Workshops - 11am-7pm

@Tompkins Square Park

Emma Goldman Film Festival - 8-11pm

September 22

@P.I.T. (Property is Theft), Brooklyn

Workshops - 11am-7pm