



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for January 22nd

7 Jan - Philly Turns Up the Heat for Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following press release about continued action in support of Black Liberation prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was sent to It's Going Down.

MORE:

A community delegation delivered thousands of petitions to Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner on January 7th, asking him to not stand in the way of justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal and to not appeal a December 27, 2018 court decision by Common Pleas Judge Leon Tucker.

Wayne Alexander Cook (nephew of Mumia Abu-Jamal) handed the 4,227 signed petitions to Krasner's assistant as they entered the DA's lobby. The thick manila envelope also contained letters from Tadashi Seto (Doro-Chiba, Japanese rail workers' union), Edwin R Ferris (International Secretary-Treasurer of International Longshore & Warehouse Union) and other labor statements in support of Abu-Jamal's quest for freedom after 37 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit.

The DA refused to talk with the group that included Michael Africa, Jr (MOVE Organization), Sandy Joy (Rowen University professor) and other members of the umbrella group Mobilization4Mumia. The DA's Director of Communications Ben Waxman did meet soon after, but revealed no new information when asked whether or not Krasner will appeal. "That's above my paygrade," he said.

The online petitions were gathered in ten days from thousands of people in the US and from around the world by Roots Action and Mobilization4Mumia.

The petitions are part of an effort to persuade Philadelphia DA Krasner to refuse an appeal of Tucker's ruling. Such an appeal would lead to years of court proceedings and further postpone Abu-Jamal's chance to prove his innocence. After almost four decades in prison and suffering from cirrhosis of the liver and related ailments, years of court delays will be nothing less than a death sentence and a denial of justice.

On January 5th, 2019 almost 200 people marched in the rain with signs and banners in front of the DA's office with demands of: "Justice Now! Krasner: Don't Appeal! Free Mumia! "

Mumia Abu-Jamal won the significant victory before Judge Leon Tucker in a decision granting Abu-Jamal new rights to re-open appeals. The ruling could impact other prisoners whose appeals were similarly denied by biased judges.

Tucker ruled that former PA Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille denied Abu-Jamal fair and impartial hearings by not recusing himself from the defendant's appeals between 1998 and 2012. The ruling referenced Castille's public statements of being a "law and order" prosecutor, responsible for 45 men on death row, the support of the Fraternal Order of Police, and new evidence supporting the claim that Castille singled out men convicted as "police killers." Tucker cited all the above because they created the appearance of bias and impropriety in the appeal process.

Abu-Jamal has always maintained his innocence in the fatal shooting of police officer Daniel Faulkner. Judge Tucker's ruling means that Abu-Jamal's appeals of his 1982 convictions are restored. Abu-Jamal has argued through his past appeals that he was framed by police and that the prosecution manufactured evidence of guilt and suppressed the proof of his innocence, in addition to other violations of his due process rights.

After decades in prison for a crime he didn't commit, Abu-Jamal's supporters are demanding that the charges should be dismissed and he should be freed.

January 9th - Philly prosecutors discover mysterious 'six boxes' connected to Mumia Abu-Jamal in storage room

by Bobby Allyn (WHYY)

Days after Christmas, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner and some of his assistants went rummaging around an out-of-the-way storage room in the office looking for some pieces of furniture. What they stumbled upon was a surprising find: six boxes stuffed of files connected to the case of convicted cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal. Five of the six boxes were marked "McCann," a reference to the former head of the office's homicide unit, Ed McCann. Some of the boxes were also marked "Mumia," or the former Black Panther's full name, "Mumia Abu-Jamal."

It is unknown what exactly the files say and whether or not the box's contents will shed new light on a case that for decades has garnered worldwide attention.

But in a letter to the judge presiding over Abu-Jamal's case, Assistant District Attorney Tracey Kavanagh wrote "nothing in the Commonwealth's database showed the existence of these six boxes," she said. "We are in the process of reviewing these boxes."

The surprise discovery comes just weeks after a Philadelphia judge reinstated appeals rights to Abu-Jamal, saying the former radio journalist and activist should get another chance to reargue his case in front of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court due to a conflict-of-interest one of the justices had at the time Abu-Jamal's petition was denied.

Abu-Jamal's supporters are seizing on the mysterious six boxes as proof that his innocence has been systematically suppressed by authorities.

"There's no question in my mind that the only reason they could've been hidden like this is that this is the evidence of the frame-up of Mumia," said Rachel Wolkenstein, who has been a legal advocate and activist for Abu-Jamal for more than 30 years.

"What these missing boxes represent is confirmation of what we've known for decades: there's hidden, exculpatory evidence in Mumia's case, and that is evidence that Mumia's guilt was intentionally manufactured by the police and prosecution and the truth of his innocence was suppressed," Wolkenstein said.

The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office did not say anything at all about what is in the boxes, or whether there is evidence that the files are exculpatory, or capable of demonstrating that Abu-Jamal did not commit a crime. During his original trial three separate eyewitnesses testified Mumia did commit the murder of Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

Wolkenstein's assessment is wild speculation, according to Ed McCann, the former homicide unit chief whose name was scrawled across the six boxes. McCann left the office in 2015 after 26 years there as a prosecutor. He was never directly involved in Abu-Jamal's case.

"I can't tell you 100% what is in these boxes," McCann said Wednesday night. "But I doubt there is anything in them that is not already in the public eye."

How and why did six boxes tied to one of the most legendary and racially-charged cases the office has ever handled get relegated to a dusty storage room?

McCann is not sure. But he said when the office moved locations in 2006, hundreds of boxes with his name written them were moved into the current headquarters on South Penn Square, just across the street from Philadelphia City Hall.

“I don’t remember these six boxes. But nobody over there discussed this with me before filing this letter,” McCann said. “I would think if they were really interested in what happened, they would have reached out to me.”

In the two-page letter to the court, assistant district attorney Kavanagh wrote that if Judge Leon Tucker would like to review the boxes, prosecutors will turn them over.

Tucker, who is the same judge who ordered that Abu-Jamal should be given a new appeals argument, has not weighed in on the newly-discovered boxes.

But in his opinion last month, Tucker said former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille should have recused himself from hearing Abu-Jamal’s petitions, since Castille himself was Philadelphia’s District Attorney when the case was actively on appeal. “True justice must be completely just without even a hint of partiality, lack of integrity or impropriety,” wrote Tucker, saying a new hearing in front of the state’s high court is warranted.

Prosecutors have not taken a position yet on Tucker’s opinion. The files unearthed in the six boxes could influence whether Krasner’s office supports or opposes a new hearing for Abu-Jamal.

Wolkenstein said the thousands of people who have joined the “Free Mumia” movement around the globe should be able to review the documents themselves.

“These files should be released publicly,” Wolkenstein said. “The remedy for this is nothing less than dismissal of Mumia’s charges and his release from prison.”

9 Jan - Iowa ‘Ag-Gag’ Law Aimed At Suppressing Journalism Against Agribusiness Is Ruled Unconstitutional

A federal court in Iowa ruled the state’s corporate-backed “ag-gag” law, which targets journalists and activists, is unconstitutional.

MORE:

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

Ag-gag laws are essentially farm secrecy statutes that were proposed and passed in multiple states to suppress and criminalize speech about industrial agricultural production.

Previously, federal courts in Idaho, and Utah found the laws violate constitutional rights.

In Iowa, a lawsuit was filed by the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI), Bailing Out Benji, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and the Center for Food Safety against the state’s ag-gag law that was passed in 2012.

“By its own terms,” the court ruled, the law criminalizes speech that inflicts no “specific harm” on property owners, “ranges very broadly,” and risks significantly chilling speech that is not covered under the statute.

“While the First Amendment doctrine permits the regulation of some categories of lies—those that cause a legally cognizable harm or material gain—it does not permit [an ag-gag law], which is so broad in its scope it is already discouraging the telling of a lie in contexts where harm is unlikely and the need for prohibition is small.”

The court added, “The right to make the kinds of false statements implicated by [the ag-gag law]—whether they be investigative deceptions or innocuous lies—is protected by our country’s guarantee of free speech and expression.”

Iowa’s ag-gag law amended a part of the state’s criminal code that already contained prohibitions “against disrupting, destroying, or damaging property at an animal facility” or on “crop operation property.”

It created the offense of “agricultural production facility fraud,” that criminalized anyone who “obtains access to an agricultural production facility by false pretenses” or “makes a false statement or representation as part of an application or agreement to be employed at an agricultural production facility, if the person knows the statement to be false and makes the statement with an intent to commit an act not authorized by the owner of the agricultural production facility.”

The state of Iowa maintained the law was necessary to protect “harms to property and biosecurity.” Yet, the court determined the state’s interest in protecting these interests do not outweigh protections for speech under the First Amendment nor did they prove that false statements need to be prohibited so “biosecurity” is not threatened.

“Defendants have made no record as to how biosecurity is threatened by a person making a false statement to get access to, or employment in, an agricultural production facility,” the court stated. “Nor, in the absence of any record to the contrary, will the court assume that biological harm turn on a human vector making a false statement in order to gain access to the facility.”

Like in other states, the law cannot stand up to scrutiny because it is designed to “suppress any unflattering coverage of inhumane slaughterhouse practices, unsanitary factory conditions, and worker abuses,” etc.

Multiple lawmakers wanted the ag-gag law passed in Iowa to stop “subversive acts” by “groups that go out and gin up campaigns to give the agricultural industry a bad name.”

In 2018, an Idaho federal appeals court upheld significant parts of a district court decision that found the state’s “ag-gag” law was unconstitutional.

“Idaho’s criminalization of misrepresentations to enter a production facility and ban on audio and video recordings of a production facility’s operations cover protected speech under the First Amendment and cannot survive constitutional scrutiny,” the appeals court ruled.

The appeals court did not ignore the history of the state’s “ag-gag” law and why corporations throughout the United States seek to suppress speech and discourage investigative journalism.

Lawmakers pursued the ag-gag law after a “secretly-filmed exposé of the operation of an Idaho dairy farm” circulated. “By all accounts, the video was disturbing: dairy workers were shown dragging a cow across the

ground by a chain attached to her neck; twisting cows' tails to inflict excruciating pain; and repeatedly beating, kicking, and jumping on cows to force them to move," the appeals court noted.

The "ag-lag law" in Wyoming was also ruled unconstitutional. It was different from the law in Idaho or Iowa in that it specifically targeted individuals who entered "open land for the purpose of collecting resource data." It was designed to suppress investigations into environmental pollution.

"Ag-gag laws are a pernicious attempt by animal exploitation industries to hide some of the worst forms of animal abuse in the United States," declared Stephen Wells, the executive director for Animal Legal Defense Fund. "Today's victory makes it clear that the government cannot protect these industries at the expense of our constitutional rights."

Yet, as Wells acknowledged, the law achieved its goal in the past seven years. No undercover investigation has taken place since the law was passed in 2012.

In at least 19 states, legislation criminalizing journalism, whistleblowing, and undercover investigations has been defeated.

Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, and North Dakota have ag-gag laws. Lawsuits against the law are pending in Kansas and North Carolina.

10 Jan - Beyond Standing Rock: WPLC Adopts New Vision and Mission Statements

WPLC's Board of Directors gathered with staff in Bismarck, ND for a two-day facilitated retreat at United Tribes College on December 15-16 to work on planning for the organization's future.

MORE:

We spent time reflecting on what we had learned through our work at Standing Rock about the state's playbook—multiple mass arrests, overcharging, the use of paid informants and infiltrators, a propaganda and disinformation campaign, repeated assaults on Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights, acts of increasingly escalated violence and human rights violations that shocked the world—and the likelihood that these same tactics will be employed in future struggles. For example, in preparation for anticipated resistance to the construction of the KXL pipeline, Butte County, SD has already contracted with a county 270 miles to the east for jail cells at \$85 per night.

We also discussed the shifting landscape of state legislation with respect to dissent generally and pipelines specifically, so-called infrastructure protection laws or SB 176, the "undisturbed use" bill passed in South Dakota in response to the mass convergence of Water Protectors at Standing Rock. While described as "an Act to preserve the use of public land, to ensure free travel, to enhance emergency response, and to declare an emergency," in reality the law allows certain state officials to prohibit more than 20 people from gathering on public lands, schools and roads.

In addition, we weighed the growing public awareness of the reality of catastrophic climate change which includes an increased acknowledgement of the disproportionate adverse impacts and burdens on Indigenous peoples and communities; both to survive it and to defend against it.

Given all of those factors, and with the mission in North Dakota near completion, clearly our motto "on-the-ground legal support for the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance at Standing Rock" was historic, and would need to be updated to reflect our new direction.

As an organization, we are guided by our shared Vision – grounded in our belief that Indigenous peoples have a unique and profoundly important role to play to stem the tide of the unfolding climate emergency we are living in. This vision is in part a result of the inspiration we draw from the transformative experiences that some of us glimpsed and others of us lived at the NoDAPL resistance camps at Standing Rock:

After receiving requests for assistance from Indigenous-led struggles in multiple regions we took stock of what skills and experience WPLC has to offer. In addition to our core legal support work, we recognized that education and skill-development for Indigenous people is a central component of our work, as is sharing legal information as a means to building agency and power in the struggle for liberation and against environmental destruction and racism. We crafted a new mission that gives us a framework for determining our future programmatic work:

WPLC is a diverse group of people from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. The thread that ties us together is that we are called to protect those who stand up to protect the environment and climate. We remain deeply honored for the opportunity to be a part of this growing movement and to continue this important work beyond Standing Rock.

11 Jan - What the Government Shutdown Really Means for Federal Prisoners

Last week, USA Today ran a hit piece on federal prisoners with the tabloid headline, “Government shutdown: Federal inmates feast on Cornish hens, steak as prison guards labor without pay.”

MORE:

by Daniel McGowan (Criminal Law Reform Project)

Not to be outdone, The Washington Post followed this up with their own shameful story under the headline, “‘I been eatin like a boss’: Federal prisoners served steak by unpaid guards during shutdown.” The problem here is twofold. First, the shutdown has nothing to do with the food served to federal prisoners and, second, the food descriptions are wildly exaggerated.

I should know. I was a federal prisoner from 2007 to 2013 and ate thousands of meals during that time. Twice a year — usually Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day — federal prisoners receive “special” meals for the holidays. These meals are rare, highly anticipated, and a touch above the low-quality food prisoners get the rest of the year. While the article used “steak” in the headline for impact, it was a little more accurate in the article, referring to the meal as roast beef. Mind you, this roast beef is not the corner delicatessen version but a grey, rubbery, low-cost version.

As offensive and archaic as these articles were, the worst aspect is they conflate a long-standing holiday meal tradition within the Bureau of Prisons with President Trump’s government shutdown. There is no fairness in blaming federal prisoners for the situation BOP staff find themselves in due to Trump’s shutdown — but it sure makes for good clickbait. Unfortunately, the government shutdown has very real impacts on federal prisoners, which the reporters ignored in their attempt to generate outrage.

With budgets frozen, daily life in prison will become even more miserable. Delays in mail being delivered; unstocked commissaries; shuttered gyms; and no classes, visits, transfers, or library access take a toll on peoples’ well-being and the relative peace in the federal prison system. I recall during potential shutdowns in the 2000s that even toilet paper was being parceled out at the rate of one roll per week.

During the current shutdown, the BOP has furloughed a portion of its staff and is making other staff work without pay, restricting many aspects of prison life even more than usual. My experience in federal prison was that during budget crises or potential shutdowns, all programs perceived as extras or nonessential were

canceled or curtailed. And I would argue that much of what the BOP perceives as “extra” is actually essential.

According to The Marshall Project, at some facilities, social visits were canceled during the holiday season due to the lack of staff in the visiting room. Visits are a critical part of prison life. They help prisoners connect to the outside world, build and repair relationships with their families, and aid reentry, all of which contribute to reducing recidivism.

I also worry about the prisoners who are waiting for compassionate release. The program has already been criticized by criminal justice reform advocates for how slow it processes applications, and the shutdown will only make this worse. Despite the fact that elderly and terminally ill prisoners’ lives hang in the balance, the BOP will consider compassionate release “nonessential.” The result: People will die in prison while their applications go unread.

Then there’s the mental health aspect to the shutdown. A significant number of people in federal prison also require mental health treatment, which will not happen while the government is shut down. A little-known fact is that all staff at a federal prison can be assigned security details, in my personal experience, and the shutdown will likely increase this. If the psychology staff is required to operate as guards, then there is no staff to run the mental health programs.

Finally, I worry about what it must be like to be in federal prison right now with prison guards and staff upset and angry about the government shutdown. Articles that conflate the government shutdown with holiday meals are grossly inappropriate and will only create an even more hostile environment if guards’ resentment against prisoners grows.

So ignore the stories about prisoners living it up during the shutdown. The reality is that prison conditions have and will only continue to deteriorate as the shutdown deprives the BOP of the resources it needs to be fully staffed. Prisoners will face the worst of the shutdown, a fact the hit pieces ignore. That’s the real story, not prisoners getting a holiday meal that I assure you is just a notch above inedible.

11 Jan - Prison wisdom of Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, former David Rice, died March 2016 serving a life without parole sentence at the Nebraska State Penitentiary for a crime he says he did not commit. During his life Mondo was a prolific writer and over time shared much wisdom.

MORE:

by Michael Richardson (Richardson Reports)

"We are living in a society in which people are commonly judged on the basis of how much stuff they have. For an African who may already be operating under the burden of "racial" self-hatred, the added burden of lacking money and the things it buys shakes his sense of self-worth. If one lacks a feeling that he is worth something, his life loses its value. A person who sees life as being worthless is willing to risk that life over practically nothing and may be willing to put the lives of others who look like him at risk as well."

"When we, as a community, do not help instill knowledge, healthy pride, and wisdom in our children, we are setting them on paths by which they may not live long enough to become men and women."

"Today, too many of our young people—in particular, males—are slaves to guns, slaves to violence, slaves to the idea that their African lives aren't worth anything, slaves to the idea that their lives aren't worth living."

"There is a lot things about life we don't understand, not only life in general but our own lives and I guess maybe what it comes down to is you. On the one hand, you have to have a sense of your own importance, but at the same time you have to have a sense of your own insignificance. There is a balance there....But at the same time, I believe in the traditional African idea in this regard, that I don't get my meaning from me, but that I get my meaning from my community."

"Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to counter the messages being delivered to our children and youth by school curricula, television, movies, video games, the music industry, and other institutions that are making slaves of our youth to violence, materialism, etc. Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to free ourselves from the invisible chains that bind our heads and spirit."

"When you have a sense that you do have a worth and that the things you need for value do not come from material things, then you are going out of your house every day to do positive and constructive things for people you love and getting that love back in return, you don't care whether or not you have good shoes. You are getting your nutrition from the spiritual stuff that is happening. You don't have that sense of self-worth when material things are eating you up."

"There is a lot things about life we don't understand, not only life in general but our own lives and I guess maybe what it comes down to is you. On the one hand, you have to have a sense of your own importance, but at the same time you have to have a sense of your own insignificance. There is a balance there....But at the same time, I believe in the traditional African idea in this regard, that I don't get my meaning from me, but that I get my meaning from my community."

12 Jan - Eric King Update

Eric has been assaulted by guards and had his communications restricted. Read on to learn how you can help.

MORE:

January 12th - Eric's Communication Restricted: Call in to Help!

Eric is still being held at USP Leavenworth after being assaulted by staff at FCI Florence. He still is being held without charges, disciplinary write-ups, or any disciplinary hearings for more than 140 days. He is still under the jurisdiction of FCI Florence and this month when he tried to call his wife for his one phone call a month he found that their communication was restricted and he was unable to call. EK remains without an explanation as everyone refuses to provide any information as to why his phone communication has been cut off.

This is incredibly problematic not only for Eric and his family for all political prisoners. If the BOP is able to block communication with Eric despite laws and regulations what is to stop them from restricting communication of other political prisoners from their support and family.

Eric is being held in absolute segregation without even a cellmate at USP Leavenworth and has been now for over 137 days now. This added to his previous time in isolation makes his time served about a year of his total prison time which is very traumatic and triggering. Eric is still dealing with the emotions that have resulted from the incidents that took place in Florence as well as that he has been unable to see his family for over 4 months now. He has missed holidays and birthdays. The day he was attacked was the day following his wife's surgery for cancer therefore he has missed being able to process subsequent medical problems with her. He is faced with the realization that for the remainder of his sentence he will be far from

his wife and kids. The letters and support he has received has been amazing and he is so thankful. While he processes the trauma and grief we ask that you stand with him and continue to show support.

We ask that folks call as often as they can and to as many offices as they can. Take a block of time and call the same number over and over, request difference staff's voicemail. Get creative but show them that we are watching and ready to protect our friend and comrade.

We got word that Eric was planning on going on a hunger strike beginning yesterday if he didn't have answers. As there is a prolonged delay in mail right now he may have already began. If this is the case it is so important that we hit the phone lines as hard as possible on Monday.

FCI Florence

Call: 719.784.9100

Ask for: The warden/assistant warden, the legal department, Counselor Quintana, Counselor Rivera. If denied demand the person answering the phone take down a message.

Email: FLF/ExecAssistant@bop.gov

BOP North Central Regional Office

Call: 913.621.3939

Ask for: Director Jeffrey Krueger. If denied ask to speak with his assistant. If denied again, demand the person answering the phone take down a message.

Email: NCRO/ExecAssistant@bop.gov

Sample Script:

Hi I am calling about Eric King, #27090045 to demand that his phone restriction be lifted. It is unacceptable to take away a prisoner's calls to his wife and family without any notice and without him being brought up on any charges.

January 18th - Eric's Attack and Torture at FCI Florence

On Aug 17th (the day after my wife's cancer was removed via surgery) after reviewing an email I sent, Lt Wilcox called me into his office. On my arrival the new SIS (Special Investigative Services) creep took me back to a mop closet. Wilcox is about 2 inches taller 30-40 lbs heavier. He is known for screaming and tough guying, making sure no one forgets what a bad ass he is.

Upon entering the mop closet he immediately begins baiting me to fight him, telling me if I hate cops so bad I should prove it by getting him. It should be noted at this point I was one week away from finally transferring to a low security prison which I had worked towards for a year of excellent work and disciplinary record. Was called a "model prisoner" (lol) in my team meetings. This was all I wanted and I was doing everything in my power to get there. But Wilcox had different ideas.

I laughed in his face, not taking some bullshit bait. Then he ordered the SIS officer out of the office for privacy and to "take care of some shit" He faced up to me and began yelling about terrorists and how bad he hates them.

Wilcox at this point lost his shit and screams in my face "you killed my daughters" at this point he was wild and seemed delusional. I asked if an anarchist killed his daughters. As he was loosing it he was threatening all sorts of vigilante justice to have me raped and killed. He made this gurgling noise and spit on me and shoved me and began to attack me.

I am no tough guy but I did box for 15 years or so & we just saw what the pigs did to Herman. It felt like they were going to kill me here and now before my transfer. So I defended myself... and I hit him back I can say that no punch in the world ever felt so good.

At this point the goons came in (4 guards) I put my hands over my head and they dragged me out and as I was on the ground kicked my head, stomach, ribs all over telling me they were going to kill me and I should just die.

I was put in a 4 point restraint bed. It was like being crucified and was left for 7 hours denied medical care in my own blood and urine. My face was unrecognizable, my glasses stolen (still no glasses), my wrists are still numb and it is difficult for me to even write letters.

This led to a horrible shitty traumatic 5 days. I was transferred to USP Florence (without authorization from the BOP) and held in a cell with a toilet clogged with someone else's shit that wouldn't flush, strobe lights overhead. Denied mail, access to my lawyer (she was putting in requests as well). When the nurse came to provide care the guards sent her away and wouldn't let her check me out saying "he is mean and doesn't deserve care" Sis took me into a room and forced me to sign a deposition. They said I would not be allowed access to my lawyer unless I signed and would stay in that cell. I made clear I was signing under duress.

I wasn't aware my team was fighting for me and felt like because the facility locks down all of the time no one would get word, but folks inside had my back and a message was sent before they shut the computers down. If my team wouldn't have been pressuring the prison they could have continued to torture me for weeks, they could have done anything. Not wanting to deal with the mess Florence decided they needed me out and after 5 days I was sent to the SHU at USP Leavenworth. I sat there still under control of Florence who took away visits, they restricted communication with my family. I have been here 140 days while Florence tried to build a case. The FBI finally notified me they were releasing the case due to the Lt's behavior. But the BOP gets their pound of flesh. I was just given a shot for "the least serious case of assault" per the BOP. Its all bullshit. It claims I attacked Wilcox during an interview instead of me being dragged to a broom closet and assaulted.

I don't have delusions that I can argue anything in my disciplinary hearing. This is something prisoners have to suffer from over and over. The disciplinary hearings are basically play acting. Prisoners without evidence are punished over and over. I consider myself lucky to be able to have a voice through this. Many prisoners who are assaulted have no recourse and protection. I would like to take a moment and notice that and if we as a community support prison abolition we need to also recognize just because it happens to our comrades it doesn't make it any more important than the abuse of ALL prisoners who don't have support.

I expect the shot to be upheld. The BOP has stated they want to send me to the CMU (communication management unit) they claim I will never walk another yard again during the rest of my time. Waiting to see what horrible spot they send me to.

I have spent 250 or so days of the last 2 years in complete isolation and it begins to completely fuck your head up. I hate this piece of shit (Wilcox) and hope for him to experience any misfortune the universe sends to him. Because of him every time a cop touches me everything goes red and I cant even think. Thank you to everyone for the mail, books and funds... this has been and will be a tough road and all of the love has been amazing. Until All Are Free.

14 Jan - Shutdown Prompts Hunger Strike at Manhattan Jail as Family Visits Are Canceled

The government shutdown is causing turmoil at the high-security federal jail in Manhattan, where some prisoners went on a hunger strike on Monday after family visits were canceled for a second week because of staffing shortages, defense lawyers said.

MORE:

by Joseph Goldstein, Benjamin Weiser, Richard A. Oppel Jr. (*New York Times*)

The jail, known as the Metropolitan Correctional Center or M.C.C., is one of the most important detention centers in the federal prison system, housing about 800 detainees. At times the inmates have included accused terrorists, prominent white-collar criminals and organized crime figures like the Mexican drug lord known as El Chapo. Still, the majority are anonymous defendants awaiting trial in obscure cases.

“They have already refused a meal — I believe they refused breakfast and lunch,” said Sarah Baumgartel, a federal public defender, who said she learned of the hunger strike from a detained prisoner whom she represents. “My client is in the unit, he’s participating,” she added. She declined to identify the client, out of concern he would be singled out.

The shutdown has also affected the dispensing of medication to some prisoners in the jail. Last week, a prosecutor said at a federal court hearing in Manhattan that his office had been “informed — we don’t have any reason to dispute this — that because of the shutdown, there are issues with prescribing medication.”

The federal Bureau of Prisons did not respond to an email seeking comment about the conditions at the M.C.C.

Beyond prisoners’ social visits, the shutdown is affecting how criminal justice is administered in the federal courts in New York. For instance, lawyers have been prevented from visiting their clients at a federal jail in Brooklyn.

On Monday, a Bureau of Prisons lawyer, Adam Johnson, emailed defense lawyers to say that “due to staff shortages,” lawyers would not be able to visit their clients at Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center, which holds about 1,600 detainees. “We regret the inconvenience and will notify you immediately once visiting resumes,” Mr. Johnson wrote.

Indeed, on seven days this month, attorney visits at the Brooklyn jail either have been canceled entirely or for several hours, according to emails sent by the Federal Defenders of New York to the chief judges of the federal district courts in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

David E. Patton, head of the federal defender office, writing to Colleen McMahon, the chief judge of the federal court in Manhattan, said that as a result of the restrictions, his office was looking into potential legal remedies, including the possibility of making new bail requests for inmates. The office represents thousands of indigent defendants.

“We’re not talking about fancy luxury items here,” Mr. Patton said in a telephone interview.

“We’re talking about being able to converse with your attorney when you haven’t yet been convicted of a crime. We’re talking about being able to see your children or your spouse or your parents.”

“This is the absolute lowest baseline we should expect of a government when it detains people and assumes responsibility for their well-being,” he added.

Edward Friedland, a spokesman for the Manhattan federal court, said, “The court is obviously concerned with the impact that the shutdown is having on defense counsels’ ability to see their clients.” He added that the court intends to follow up with the wardens in both institutions.

Details about the hunger strike at the M.C.C. were scarce. Ms. Baumgartel said the protest may have been limited to one unit in the jail. She said that her client told her he wanted to participate in the strike “because of the importance of everyone having their visits.”

Serene Gregg, the president of a local of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents about 200 correctional workers and other staffers at the M.C.C., said that the shutdown had inflamed problems at an already severely short-staffed jail. Recreation time has been curbed or canceled, and the inmates’ access to doctors and other medical care has curtailed, she said.

Some inmates who request care, she said, are being taken out of their cells to see a physician, but then “nobody is there to see them, so they’re being sent back.”

“We are providing inadequate medical care at this point,” Ms. Gregg said. “We don’t have the medical providers to see them.”

Asked about prisoners refusing to eat, Ms. Gregg said, “There has been some pushback from inmates in terms of eating the meals provided.”

“The tensions in the building are very, very high,” she added.

17 Jan - Years After Protests, NYPD Retains Photos of Black Lives Matter Activists

The records raise questions about the department’s compliance with its protest monitoring rules.

MORE:

by George Joseph (*The Appeal*)

It was Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2015. Black Lives Matter protests were still erupting across the country, and M.J. Williams, a lawyer and activist, was excited to get more involved. The month before, Williams had started to attend weekly protests at New York City’s Grand Central Station. That day, she was at Foley Square, and activists from the group organizing the weekly demonstrations had invited her to join them in a small, nonpermitted march up to Grand Central. The march hadn’t been publicized on social media, and organizers intended to take authorities by surprise.

“One of them saw me and said quietly, ‘Hey M.J., we’re going to be doing a wildcat march up to Grand Central. Do you want to come?’” she recalled. “So I went over to that group and we began marching north.” Only eight or nine people had been told about their plans, she remembers, but within about 25 minutes, police had figured out where they were and cut off their route. “More cops were there than protesters, so much so that we decided to take the subway.”

At the time, Williams thought nothing of this encounter, since police were responding to protests across the city. But over the next few months, Williams began to fear that the NYPD was somehow getting inside information on their plans. Though the movement in New York began to fade in early 2016, Williams continued to think about the NYPD’s potential surveillance of activists, and helped litigate several Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests to get public records on the department’s activities.

The records she helped obtain over the past few years corroborated her fears. One release revealed that the department had undercover at the protests. Another showed that NYPD was frequently filming activists.

Now a new release, which Williams shared with The Appeal, shows that the NYPD has maintained dozens of photos of activists who took part in the protests over four years ago. The photos were attachments from emails sent from late 2014 to early 2015 between NYPD personnel, discussing specific protesters and their movements. The emails include intelligence gathered by undercover officers, photo attachments of protesters at demonstrations across New York City, and social media posts from Twitter.

Williams and other advocates say the years-long retention of these photos and social media posts raises serious questions about whether the NYPD is violating its own protest policing regulations, known as the Handschu Guidelines, which limit what protest materials it can retain in the absence of potential unlawful activity.

Rachel Levinson-Waldman, senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice's Liberty and National Security Program, said the photo retention also raises First Amendment concerns.

"There are First Amendment questions about how long you can keep and access these photos," she said. "How is it being used and kept? These practices could potentially chill First Amendment activities. I would have a concern if [photos of] basically innocent third parties are living in these files and being used for other reasons. What protections do they have?"

Photos on file

The Handschu Guidelines were established by consent decree after a 1985 class action suit, *Handschu v. Special Services Division*, in which a group of political activists successfully challenged NYPD surveillance practices.

The guidelines state that the NYPD is authorized to attend any public event, on the same terms and conditions as members of the public generally, for the purpose of detecting or preventing terrorist activities. But, the department may not retain "information obtained from such visits" unless "it relates to potential unlawful or terrorist activity."

Williams says the release of these photos suggests that the images are not part of a current investigation because, as she knows from past responses she has received from the NYPD, the department would otherwise have withheld them. The NYPD did not respond to requests for comment about that assertion.

The photos themselves show scores of activists at numerous demonstrations from the final week of November 2014 into the first three weeks of January 2015.

Some of the photos include individuals wearing masks or carrying bags during the marches while others are of people just standing around.

One of the photos shows Daniel Schneider, a member of Cop Watch, a group that films police-community interactions, standing at Times Square, wearing his group's sweatshirt.

According to the emails, released alongside the attachments, police appeared to believe that Schneider was a main protest organizer. "Coordinator at times square... has walkie talkie," states one message from 5:06 a.m. on Dec. 5, 2014.

That afternoon, NYPD officials appeared to have shared the same photo of him again, referring to him as "one of the guys that was on the two way radios organizing the crowds to different locations."

Schneider, who reviewed the photos from that day, said he was using his walkie-talkie to stay in touch with other Cop Watch activists, and was not directing the marches. He said seeing himself in the images was no shock, given how frequently the NYPD films protests.

“I wasn’t surprised since almost every demo I’ve been to, there’s almost always an officer with a video camera that walks by,” Schneider told The Appeal. “The fact that they still have the photograph after all this time is concerning,” he continued. “State surveillance of people exercising their rights is not something that should occur. I don’t think that’s right, it’s a way to stymie political speech and action.”

Schneider wasn’t the only Cop Watch member photographed by police. They also released another image of a person wearing a Cop Watch sweatshirt, back turned, filming police.

The photo records also include several screenshots of people’s social media posts, which appear to have been shared with top officials at the NYPD’s Intelligence Bureau, including Chief Thomas Galati, according to the accompanying released emails. Some of these include information about planned protests; others are redacted.

Martin Stolar, an attorney who helped win the Handschu settlement, says that he and other attorneys involved in the settlement are considering whether the retained photos are part of “a pattern and practice of unlawful activity.” If the lawyers decide the NYPD’s conduct was unlawful, and not isolated, they could raise the matter in court. “We are reviewing and haven’t made a determination yet,” Stolar said by phone. “All I can tell you is we haven’t gone to court on anything yet.”

Redacted sources

In addition to concerns about photo retention, the NYPD’s description of the redactions in the records raises questions about their intelligence-gathering techniques. According to the NYPD, the redactions include not only “personally identifying information of NYPD personnel such as names and email address,” but also “any references that may identify any sources as well as any references to non-routine law enforcement sensitive procedures relating to the Intelligence Bureau.”

The NYPD did not respond to The Appeal’s request for comment about who the redacted sources might be. Joe Giacalone, a retired NYPD detective sergeant and an adjunct professor at the City University of New York’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice, says the phrase could refer to any number of sources, including but not limited to confidential informants.

“If you have a confidential informant working in the group, you wouldn’t want to reveal [it],” he said, referring to the redactions. He also noted that sources could be either human, like undercover officers, or technological, like video surveillance. The vague description of the redactions, he continued, keeps people guessing “which helps the intelligence bureau because it makes people paranoid.” If people are scared, he added, they might be less likely to act recklessly. “That’s the idea.”

The presence of an undercover officer or confidential informant could help explain how the police seemed to have information that was confined to only a small group of activists, Williams said. During the 2015 MLK Day protest she attended, which was referenced in a previous NYPD FOIL release, one redacted source sent a message to a police official: “Group at Foley mention that they are going to march over to Grand Central.” Williams says it’s inconceivable that a uniformed police officer overheard their plans because they would not have spoken in close range of one.

“I think it was either someone who was standing so close to us that there was no concern about that information getting out, or someone who was trusted among that group of eight or nine,” she said.

In recent years, the NYPD has been known to use such tactics. In 2013, for example, Occupy Wall Street activists learned that a fellow protester, whom they knew as “Albert,” was actually an NYPD detective named Wojciech Braszczok. Throughout 2012 and 2013, Braszczok posed as an activist, attending meetings, getting arrested at demonstrations, and even showing up at activists’ social events.

On Monday, in a separate FOIL case filed by the New York Civil Liberties Union, a state Supreme Court judge ruled that the NYPD had to turn over records relating to how the department tracked Black Lives Matter activists’ cell phones and social media activity.

Kim Ortiz, an organizer with NYC Shut It Down, a New York Black Lives Matter group, said the knowledge of such tactics has weighed heavily on activists. “Like it or not, you have to operate under the assumption everything is being watched,” she said. “Of course it inhibits my freedom, but that’s the reality, so it’s safest to operate under the assumption that we’re being listened to and watched at all times.”

17 Jan - Notes towards the Regeneration of the Left

This slipped past us and was written a couple of months ago. Please check it out and write to Connor, who was recently moved...again.

MORE:

Part One: Anarchy & the Circle

What has become of the Anarchist project? Where are we, and where are we going?

It is necessary for any conscious being to continuously return to the source of their actions, their thoughts, their drive: what are our motives, our aims, our visions, our inspirations? Why are we Anarchists? Anti-Authoritarians? Anti-Fascists?

When I reflect on my life and what has motivated me to pursue revolutionary struggle, I return inevitably to a sense of justice, an abiding empathy, and an intuitive knowing that this life has immense unrealized potential, both on the scale of individuals and in Societies—the one being a sort of reflection of the other.

In a word, I take Bliss as my guide. The pursuit of pleasure not only of the sort that is realized as I overcome obstacles and endure suffering, transmuting it through the sciences of the Soul into wisdom, strength, and heightened experience. But also the immediate pleasures of physical bliss, of sex and highs and physical struggle and embrace. I am drawn to the bliss that flows from honoring the place of the individual, my self, in the scheme of Creation, both the minute and the immense. In the Paths that unfold upon pursuing Truth, ultimately, from which one presumes Justice and Supreme Bliss flows, I relate the self both to the ant as well as the ancestor; the blade of grass as well as the fulfillment of Mars. At the risk of sounding ridiculous, I say that the revolutionary is motivated by a profound sense of the Soul; laboring for the Sovereignty of the Soul, over and above the sovereignty of collectivities and fantasies. We are the means by which Social Custom is burnt in the furnace of Bliss, so that it may fertilize the future, come what may. We are the means by which Dreams become Realities, and Realities are acknowledged to be the fulfillment of games that we play with our selves and one another, many Others, human and nonhuman, known and Unknown.

This is what has caused the forever-decrepit guardians of Custom, of empty gestures of tradition, to see us as Daemons, as the wicked possessed-of-genius undermining Law, Christianity, Civilization. But what they do not say openly is that were it not for Lucifer, there would never have been such brilliant light as Civilization in the dark wilderness of the Abyss. Were it not for the Bringer of the Light-within-the-

darkness, there would not have ignited in the minds of humanity the Black Flame of consciousness, the unfolding of Consciousness.

Were it not for the Adversary, there would be no Overcoming.

This is the Mystery that allows the self to come into Historical consciousness, a heightened consciousness of the potentialities of Self in the maelstrom of Collectivities. And only such ones, burning with Consciousness, can create a Collectivity that does not destroy all that is beautiful, but rather, endlessly extrapolates upon it.

But what am I saying?

We are travelling, forever, into darkness, and I take Bliss as my guide. Therefore, comrades, let us shed our Dogma as we shed dead skin and the frivolities of last night. Let us erect principles, but only as guide-posts, always subservient to that ultimate principle: Do What Thou Wilt. And let us never forget that we are playing a game, albeit the best game in town.

But as revolutionaries we need Action, even if it is merely to make total fucking destroy. So what actions, do I say, propel our pursuit of Bliss? There are the obvious ones, and each self must come into communion with their own Soul, to be guided as to their own nature and the unravelling of their own desires.

Beyond this, what am I saying?

Today we see the resurgence of Democratic Socialism. We see the igniting of consciousness on a planetary level, which manifested itself in the United States as the Occupy movement, and can trace the fiery lineage of this trajectory through the Black Lives Matter movement. The awakened sense of possibilities that began to grip my generation in 2011 continued in some ways with Bernie Sanders in 2016, inspiring my generation in a way that no other political movement has, not even anti-fascism, that narrow segment of our greater trajectory. We see the rebirth of a new form of socialism, outlined in the works of Sanders and others. But it is a State socialism, to be sure. In Occupy, we glimpsed its State-less essence. It is the latter that must be championed by Anarchists and anti-authoritarians.

Nonetheless, if this reborn Democratic Socialism (exemplified in Abrams, Gillum, Sanders and others across the U.S.) propels us on our way, if it enhances our bliss and allows us to come closer to the realization of our visions -- or at least their clarification -- than certainly this is better than mere howling in the desert or Radical posturing, Et Cetera.

Certainly it is better that the First Step Act become law and therefore every single federal prisoner with a release date is closer to being released, than to abstain from dirtying one's Righteous hands in the grime of Politics, the labyrinth of representative democracy. Certainly there are millions of humans and many more nonhumans who would prefer the policies of an Abrams or a Sanders over their counterparts, even if neither are what we envision for this world.

It is crucial that we continually reevaluate our selves, our movements, our deeds. What are we really doing this for? Surely it is for the fulfillment of potential, the realization of bliss, the translation of desire into reality. Therefore, how can we justify adherence to a dogma which causes us to abstain from engaging in the realization of concrete changes here and now?

It was disturbing and enlightening how many self-described Anarchists abstained from involvement in Occupy, or merely put forth gestures of solidarity (all-too-often a persistent abstraction haunting the Left),

because they believed it was tainted with Liberalism, or inexperience, or that it would simply be crushed in no time at all. Continue then, I say, to abstain! As the Communists so often say, perpetually waiting for the ripening of Conditions. No revolution worthy of the name needs such adherents.

We must not allow our sub-cultural conditioning to blind us to reality, and dogma to pacify us. What does it say about Anarchists if the liberals are in fact more fervent, more Active? Perhaps too many Anarchists today worship dead deities.

At the risk of ridicule and rejection I will openly state that I support the movement of Democratic Socialists. I support criminal justice (gasp!) reform. I support the efforts to wield the State in a more humane and rational manner -- not because I accept the State, or because I no longer strive for a world without the State, but precisely because I still very much believe in the possibility of this great vision we have been fighting for for some two centuries. If tactics and strategies do not work, we must not hesitate to discard them. If other tactics and strategies throw into question our assumptions, but nonetheless prove effective at bringing forth the realization of positive change in the world, then we must seriously examine both our assumptions and the new tactics and strategies.

There are two fundamental elements that must progress in tandem. I do not see a contradiction between, say, Sean Swain and Stacey Abrams, though they may denounce one another. We need to take serious the idea of a new Left, which does not take any tools off the proverbial table.

I have seen reactionary cults inspire young men to greater degrees of knowledge, discipline, and self-awareness. I have seen Christianity inspire men to revolution. I have seen the real-world impact of engaging the system on its own terms, but from the standpoint of Socialism. And I have experienced the real-world power of Anarchy.

When we limit our selves and our Ideas about the world and how to engage with it, we are only cutting ourselves off from life itself, and from those very possibilities we claim to be fighting for.

For too long, we have gone on in our ineffective tribes and cults, pissing on one another. Now we must begin the real work of regenerating the Left, soul and body.

17 Jan - House Subcommittee Report Highlights ‘Culture Of Fear And Retaliation’ In Federal Prisons

Wardens and other senior officials in the federal prison system engage in gross misconduct, avoid consequences by disrupting investigations and disciplinary proceedings, and encourage a “culture of fear and retaliation,” according to a report from a subcommittee of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

MORE:

by Brian Sonenstein (*Shadowproof*)

The deep-seated abuses documented in the report have appeared in other government oversight records going back to at least 2004, yet according to the report, “the culture apparently remains.” That culture may impact some efforts to bring relief to federal prisoners via reforms like the First Step Act, which will be implemented this year.

The report was submitted during the last Congress by Republicans on the Subcommittee on National Security and is dated January 2, 2019.

“These measures of protection have given management at many [Bureau of Prisons (BOP)] facilities a disturbing level of impunity,” the report states.

The subcommittee found 12 complaints against five wardens that were opened and closed on a single day. Complaints against senior staff included assaults on prisoners, falsifying records, creating a hostile work environment, embezzlement, harassment, and retaliation. None of the people who lodged complaints were notified of their outcome.

Misconduct was “largely tolerated or ignored altogether.” The names of specific facilities and personnel were not published in the report.

The report highlighted two cases in which reports of sexual harassment by senior officials led to retaliation. Subordinates were verbally berated, transferred to other facilities, and demoted.

Rather than operate in accordance with shared policies and practices, each facility is run as “its own island within BOP” and local investigators are “superficially independent,” susceptible to influence by senior staff, the report indicated

Management is in a position to learn sensitive details of allegations against them, including the name of their accuser and the subject of investigation. They can influence how and whether there is an investigation and what actions, if any, are taken. Knowing the identity of their accusers increases the chance that accusers face retaliation, and whistleblowers have experienced discrimination within a week of filing a complaint.

The management structure within BOP facilities contributes to the breakdown in oversight. Local investigators are typically lieutenants chosen by the warden and are subordinate to upper management.

The report noted investigators have three levels of supervisors above them with the power to threaten their employment, especially if upper management are the subject of complaints and they are unhappy with an investigator’s findings.

Senior officials who engaged in misconduct received extremely lenient consequences and were moved to different facilities to avoid punishment.

In some cases, they received commendations and awards after reports were made against them. Some were allowed to retire with a clean record and full benefits, and cases were delayed to allow them to end their careers unscathed.

The subcommittee recommended that senior prison officials be excluded from the investigative process and barred from influencing decisions. (This recommendation has been made in previous years.)

They also suggested that people who report misconduct be informed of the status and outcome of the investigation.

The report omitted the perspectives of people incarcerated in the federal prison system and their loved ones, focusing primarily on BOP employees. But prisoners also suffer from the impunity of senior officials in their facilities.

“Overall, people often fear retribution for reporting waste fraud and abuse. The difference is incarcerated people do not have whistleblower protections like federal employees,” Maureen told Shadowproof. (Her daughter is in federal prison, and we’re withholding identifying information to protect her from retaliation.)

“Like the military, the prison environment is ripe for sexual harassment and abuse and sweeping incidents under the rug.”

“Incarcerated people know to expect retribution if they speak up about wrongdoing behind bars,” Maureen added. “They know there is a serious lack of oversight and no independent oversight authority outside of DOJ [Department of Justice] or DOC [Department of Corrections].”

Maureen described how her daughter and other incarcerated women spoke out against poor living conditions and medical care following a natural disaster.

“The women knew if they complained they would face some serious consequences. They accepted those consequences because someone needed to do something about the terrible conditions in that prison.”

“Like other families with incarcerated loved ones,” Maureen continued, “I was afraid to complain because I was concerned about what would happen to our loved ones. The women kept telling us though, we have to do something. The administrative remedy process was not working. Their complaints were getting lost, misfiled or simply thrown away and the poor conditions were not getting addressed.”

“With their consent, the families of these women filed complaints with the DOJ OIG. The DOJ OIG showed up at that prison unannounced a few weeks later.”

Maureen said her daughter and some of the women were put in solitary confinement after investigators came. Though allegations of misconduct against her were not substantiated, she was transferred to a different facility.

“Despite having been a model inmate, excellent conduct and having a strong work and programming history, she arrived at the next facility being labeled a troublemaker. She was fortunately able to overcome that hurdle and continues to do her time well.”

She said the “lesson that incarcerated people have learned is that you should expect retribution just like this or worse if you speak up about waste, fraud, and abuse.”

The BOP management culture highlighted in the report will likely affect the efficacy of certain aspects of the First Step Act.

Some provisions of the new law rely on the discretion and approval of wardens. For example, one important provision of the law involves keeping families connected to their networks and communities by moving them to facilities within 500 miles of home.

However, the language of the bill makes clear that these transfers are subject to “the recommendation from the warden of the prison at which the prisoner is incarcerated at the time of making the request.”

Wardens also play a role in determining who is eligible for pre-release custody. According to the law, among the criteria for such a placement is that the individual is either assessed to have a low risk of recidivism in their last two assessments or that they have a petition to be transferred approved by a warden.

Those petitioning prisoners will be placed at the mercy of a warden, who must determine the individual is not “a danger to society,” has made a “good faith effort to lower their recidivism risk” through programs and activities, and is “unlikely to recidivate.”

The First Step Act also lets wardens prohibit mentoring, reentry, or spiritual services for prisoners in pre-release custody “if the warden finds that the provision of such services would pose a significant security risk to the prisoner, persons who provide such services, or any other person.”

For wardens who engage in patterns of abuse and retaliation described in the report, these areas of discretion could be a major cause for concern.

20 Jan - Paying it Forward: North Carolina J20 Ex-Defendants Pass on Anti-Repression Funds

As part of this weeks call to action on #J20, former defendants are donating thousands of dollars to anarchist and antifascist prisoner support projects all over the world.

MORE:

Two years ago, roughly twenty anarchists, anti-fascists, and anti-capitalists from the North Carolina region were among the 200+ people arrested for disrupting the Presidential Inauguration, also known as J20).

Some of us went to trial. Some of us stuck it out until the final dismissal. None of us accepted their bullshit pleas. Despite the prosecution’s divide and conquer tactics, we stuck together. And we beat them! Along the way we learned valuable lessons, gained stronger relationships, and, thanks to our amazing regional support network, a few thousand dollars in defense funds.

With the J20 cases now dismissed, our contribution to this year’s J20 week of action is to pass on those funds in the same spirit that they were given to us—to support those facing repression for their struggles:

Anarchist Black Cross Federation Warchest – to the amount of \$3,000.

The ABCF Warchest has existed since 1994 and sends a \$30 monthly stipend to political prisoners based on their level of need. Had J20 not ended victoriously for any of us, we know that the Anarchist Black Cross would have been there to give us long-term support, even as the case stopped showing up in the headlines. Realistically, some of us were only a few bad rulings away from actually serving time, so it’s important to us to demonstrate material solidarity with those who **are** doing time for their struggles against oppression and domination. For many of us, the stories behind the political prisoners supported by ABC inspired us to face the J20 charges with our heads held high, & we thank them for their continuing courage.

Ferguson Prisoners Fund – \$2,000

This fund is managed by a closed collective that sends \$20-a-month to prisoners related to the 2014 Ferguson, Missouri uprising. The \$2,000 that we’re donating will cover outstanding costs, post-release needs, help for Ferguson prisoners’ families, and survival expenses like winter clothes in prison.

The current wave of fascism and Trumpism that we stood up against on January 20, 2017 is a reaction to the 2014-2016 wave of black revolt that swept across the USA. The debut of this movement came with the Ferguson Uprising, so it just felt natural to give what we could to those doing time for sparking one of the most important rebellions of our lifetime.

The International Anarchist Defense Fund – \$2,000

The International Anarchist Defense Fund gives 10% of its total funds to each request that its collective of donors approves. As reactionary governments are spreading across the globe, this fund is a way to support comrades in countries where fundraising is difficult, where American dollars can go a lot further.

Solidarity with Russian Anarchists and Anti-fascists – \$2,000

Since 2017, the FSB, the Russian version of the FBI, has been rounding up anti-fascists and anarchists and torturing them with gruesome violence (including electrocution) in order to make them sign false confessions. FBI-infatuated liberals would like us to see the Russian government as a threat to us **as Americans**, but as defendants who were threatened with decades in prison for resisting authoritarianism here—who were prosecuted in a case where the plaintiff was **literally** the United States of America—we don't harbor any national allegiance. On the other hand, we **do** support the brave souls actually facing the brunt of the Russian state: anarchist & anti-fascist freedom fighters. The real conflict is not between nations like Russia & the US, but between the governments of those nations & the people they seek to oppress.

International solidarity against all forms of state repression!

Take Action Chapel Hill – \$1,000

Being from North Carolina, we also wanted to show solidarity with the struggles against white supremacy where we live. Last year, brave anti-racists and anti-fascists tore down the confederate Silent Sam statue in Chapel Hill. As of this writing, 20 activists are still facing charges for opposing white supremacy and neo-confederates during events in the wake of the fall of Silent Sam. Take Action Chapel Hill's Anti-Racist Activist Fund provides support for these activists' legal costs.

Collectively, you threatened us with thousands of years in prison, but now, thanks to you, we're donating thousands of dollars to support political prisoners in the USA and revolutionaries facing state repression across the world.

Thanks to you, the J20 case has catalyzed an annual week of action to demonstrate direct action, mutual aid, and visions of liberation.

Thanks to you, our relationships are stronger, our understanding of state repression and collective defense has grown, and our dedication to fighting for liberation has deepened.

So, as weird as this may sound, thank you. All this may not have been the goal you were reaching for (emphasis on the "reaching" part), but you did a good job. If only all prosecutors were as effective as you were with the J20 case... But your job is done now. So, Jennifer Kerkhoff, you may kindly Fuck Off.

20 Jan - Help Needed for Joe-Joe Bowen

Call from New York Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) to support a long-running political prisoner.

MORE:

via It's Going Down

New York Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) has received a letter from our comrade and political prisoner Joseph "Joe-Joe" Bowen, aka The Old Man. Last year, after four decades of continuous detention in solitary confinement, Joe-Joe was released into general population. Recently, after a verbal argument with a corrections officer (CO) over the content of a book Joe-Joe is writing, he was transferred to another prison and has been held in solitary confinement since. Joe-Joe needs our help.

Call or email DOC Secretary John Wetzel: **717.728.2577**

Ra-crpadocsecretary@pa.gov; ra-contactdoc@pa.gov

Demand that Wetzel not put Joseph Bowen AM4272 on the restricted release list or on permanent lock-down status. Please let us know what response you receive. NYC ABC can be reached by email at nycabc@riseup.net, or on twitter, instagram, or facebook at @NYCABC

Since his transfer, Joe-Joe has had no access to the very basics to get by in solitary confinement during a winter in Pennsylvania: thermal underwear, shower sandals, t-shirts, a towel, or washcloths.

Please donate at [paypal.me/nycabc](https://www.paypal.me/nycabc) or send well-concealed cash, a check, or money order (made payable to NYC ABC and noting funds are for Joe-Joe) to:

NYC ABC

Post Office Box 110034

Brooklyn, New York 11211

27 Jan - RiseUp4Rojava NYC

WHAT: Solidarity Demonstration

WHEN: 2:00-4:00pm, Sunday, January 27th

WHERE: Union Square North Plaza

COST: FREE

MORE:

In response to the Rojava Internationalist Commune's call for two days of action on January 27 and 28, the Emergency Committee for Rojava is organizing a rally.

The rally coincides with International Kobane Day, the fourth anniversary of the day Kobane triumphed, after a long and fierce struggle, in its battle with the Islamic State. During the battle for Kobane it was the outpouring of public pressure that finally forced the international powers to act. Now Turkey is threatening the entirety of Rojava and once again, it is imperative that we show the people of Rojava that they are not alone, and that we demand an end to U.S. complicity with Turkey's war on the Kurds.

Giran Ozcan, U.S. Representative of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), will be keynote speaker. Other speakers and co-sponsors TBA.

Proposed slogans for the demonstration are:

DEFEND ROJAVA

NO U.S. COMPLICITY WITH TURKEY'S WAR ON THE KURDS

27 Jan - Anarchists Care About Books (ACAB): The Left Hand of Darkness

WHAT: Book discussion

WHEN: 4:00-6:00pm, Sunday, January 27th

WHERE: Bluestockings - 172 Allen Street, New York, New York

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join us to discuss [The Left Hand of Darkness](#) by Ursula K. LeGuin.