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Updates for April 6th

24 Mar - Prison Mail Surveillance Company Keeps Tabs On Those On the Outside, Too

MailGuard, operated by sketchy prison parasite corporation Smart Communications, is spreading across state and federal jails and prisons.

MORE:

by Aaron Gordon (VICE)

In March 2018, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VA DOC) was trying to gain more control over the mail its approximately 30,000 incarcerated people received. Mainly, it wanted to close a loophole in which people posed as businesses so they could include color photos. A contact at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections recommended they talk to a Florida company called Smart Communications about its product, MailGuard.

Smart Communications offered to do a whole lot more than that. It offered VA DOC a suite of products that would make it possible for prison officials to monitor and search all inmate communications with the outside world. It would create a searchable database of everything each prisoner said and received, along with who said it. And, the company claimed, it would include postal mail in this dragnet through its MailGuard product, by scanning each mail item at a remote facility and uploading PDFs for incarcerated people to view from a tablet. The people in prisons would never receive the physical letter.

The MailGuard system works by having senders address their mail not to the prison, but to a PO box rented by Smart Communications. For state DOCs, the company offers to set up a mail receiving facility in the state, and then ship the mail to its Florida facility for processing. There, the mail is opened, scanned, and uploaded. According to the proposal, inmates would then log into a kiosk to view the PDFs of their mail remotely. After 30 days, the mail is destroyed. There is no way for incarcerated people to ever physically hold or recover their mail.

And, the company said, it would not only track incarcerated people inside the walls, but their friends, family, and anyone who sent mail to them, too.

"Investigators will have access to the postal mail sender's Email address, physical address, IP Address, mobile cell number, GEO GPS location tracking, exact devices used when accessing system [sic], any related accounts the sender may also make or use," Smart Communications said in a proposal for VA DOC. The proposal and other documents were obtained through a public records request.

Motherboard is posting the proposal, which was created specifically for the VA DOC, because it shows how a private company proposed a complex surveillance system that would keep tabs not just on incarcerated people but also on the people who sent mail to them, even if they were not suspected of a crime.

This system, Smart Communications boasted, "eliminates anonymity of postal mail, now postal mail has a digital fingerprint with new intelligence." And this intelligence could be used to crack down on "gang members."

When Motherboard asked Smart Communications for comment on this article, a lawyer for the company demanded that we not publish any of the documents, which were obtained using freedom of information laws that journalists regularly use to procure public documents about how taxpayer money is being spent and the general dealings of a democratic government.

"I understand you have obtained information relating to a confidential proposal that Smart Communications previously made to the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Corrections. Please be advised that this proposal and the information therein was provided pursuant to a confidentiality understanding / NDA and was clearly and prominently designated as CONFIDENTIAL, PROPRIETARY, and TRADE SECRET," David Gann, general counsel with Smart Communications wrote in an email. "It should never have been shared with you or anyone else by the recipient. We will deal with that issue separately, but regardless, Smart Communications demands that you, Vice Media, Motherboard, and any other affiliated companies or entities immediately cease and desist all efforts to further disseminate or distribute any information obtained in that confidential proposal. Smart Communications further demands that you immediately destroy all copies of its proposal."

In its FOI response, the VA DOC claimed that it did not have any nondisclosure agreement with Smart Communications. The documents obtained as part of this request were automatically made available through Muckrock, the nonprofit platform Motherboard used to file the request on. Motherboard has redacted some inmate personal information and personal contact information for Smart Communications executives.

"Smart Communications takes the protection of its intellectual property and confidential / trade secret information very seriously, and it will pursue all violations to the fullest extent of the law," Gann continued. "Please immediately confirm receipt of this email, that you will not further violate Smart Communications' intellectual property rights by publishing any aspect of its confidential proposal, and that you have destroyed all copies of Smart Communications' confidential material."

The proposal, which VA DOC did not ultimately pursue, does not explain in detail how Smart Communications' platform works, it generally lists its capabilities and prices. VA DOC opted to spend about \$7 million a year on an in-house solution of photocopying and shredding all mail before delivering the copied version to people in prison. But Pennsylvania did sign a contract with Smart Communications, through an emergency procurement process, due to a controversial and contested claim of a surge in mail being laced with synthetic marijuana.

The rollout was "a mess," according to Quinn Cozzens, staff attorney at the Pittsburgh-based Abolitionist Law Center, a public interest law firm.

"Mail was delayed for weeks or months and was regularly delivered to the wrong person. Color photos were scanned and delivered in black and white, often with portions of the picture cut off. They rejected mail and returned it to the sender without explanation for why it was rejected." Plus, the promised kiosks never materialized, as PA DOC staff printed out the PDFs on copy paper and handed them to incarcerated people just like VA DOC does.

While Pennsylvania's deal with Smart Communications was widely reported at the time, the extent of the company's capability to track people not in prison has not been previously known.

"Smart Communications has been boasting of their dystopian surveillance system at least since they were awarded a contract by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in 2018," said Cozzens. "Smart Communications' total surveillance of every aspect of communications with incarcerated people is a chilling convergence of the expansion and privatization of the surveillance state on one hand, and a growing private industry that profits from holding human beings in cages on the other."

The extent of Smart Communications' reach across the U.S. mass incarceration landscape is not yet known. In communications with the Nebraska Department of Corrections in October 2018, which Motherboard also obtained via a public records request, a company representative boasted of its contract with Pennsylvania and claimed to be "under contract negotiations with Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Utah, and Florida!"

At least in Virginia's case, this was a bit of an exaggeration, as Virginia received a proposal but never pursued it. The majority of the company's clients appear to be regional and county prisons.

"Written correspondence is one of the most, if not the most, important means for incarcerated people to maintain connections with family and loved ones outside of prison," Cozzens said. "Smart Communications prevents incarcerated people from ever holding a drawing sent to them by their child, or an original photograph, or a handwritten letter from a loved one that hasn't been scanned and reprinted on a sheet of copier paper."

In the proposal, Smart Communications estimated it would pocket \$1.8 million in profits over a five-year period through payments from VA DOC for equipment and maintenance. At least in PA DOC's case, incarcerated people do not have to pay to access their mail, although Smart Communications told VA DOC that if it opted for its digital communications suite, people sending messages to people in prisons would have to pay 50 cents a message or \$1 a photo.

Smart Communications offered VA DOC a system to monitor, approve, and potentially reject mail using a "management console" giving them "instant access to the entire VADOC database of inmate mail." Investigators can receive real-time alerts via text or email when an inmate marked as a gang member or otherwise flagged receives an item of mail.

Letters can be approved or rejected by DOC staff. Screenshot: Virginia Dept of Corrections

The company further offered VA DOC the "Smart Tracker" system, the one that tracks the people who send incarcerated people mail. The proposal doesn't detail how the system works, but it appears to use the data people input to create an account through the "Smart Jail Mail" portal to connect them to the letters they send. The company retains all digital copies of mail for seven years, meaning if the system is used in enough prison systems, over time it could generate a considerable database about who associates with whom.

This creates real privacy concerns for people whose only "crime" is trying to communicate with someone in prison, says Aaron Mackey, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation who has worked on prisoner privacy issues.

"People who communicate with prisoners are now going to have reduced autonomy, privacy and expression and associational rights," Mackey said, "because now, wholly innocent individuals who are trying to just communicate with family and loved ones, members of their community and so on, are now going to be caught up in this surveillance." Even institutions like social service organizations and religious leaders will be caught up in the dragnet, Mackey warned, potentially getting flagged as troublesome figures because they communicate with people in prisons.

But the most significant issue, both Mackey and Cozzens say, is the emotional toll not receiving physical mail takes on incarcerated people. Even before the pandemic, many prisons have gradually shifted to encourage mostly digital interactions through video visitation and similar efforts. Physical mail was a key link between people in prison and their support networks. That link is being cut.

To be sure, people in prison do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy even for physical mail. Prior to the Smart Communications contract, all postal mail in Pennsylvania state prisons was opened and physically inspected for contraband by prison staff and skimmed for contents, Cozzens said. But it was rarely scanned and preserved. Once the initial inspection was complete, the mail was delivered to the person it was addressed to.

Cozzens sees a huge difference between that approach and what Smart Communications is doing. "There is quite a difference between a prison guard potentially skimming over a letter one time before delivering it,

and every person who sends mail to an incarcerated person having their letters scanned, rendered digitally searchable, stored for seven years, and on top of that their personal information is also stored and meticulously tracked." He compared it to police agencies merely writing down a license plate when they pull someone over versus deploying license plate readers on a mass scale.

"This is just another step down that road," Mackey said, "where prisoners increasingly have diminished rights and privacy."

24 Mar - Sundiata Acoli has new support site

Long time political prisoner Sundiata Acoli has a new support website <sundiataacolifc.org> coinciding with a revived campaign to free him. Additional updates follow.

MORE:

March 28th - After Half Century in Prison, Elderly Black Panther Should Not Be Left to Die

by Natasha Lennard (*The Intercept*)

Sundiata Acoli is 84 years old and has been in prison for nearly half a century. When the state of New Jersey locked him up in 1974, Acoli was not sentenced to die behind bars; he has been eligible for parole for almost three decades. The much-loved father and grandfather has an exemplary disciplinary record and a stellar history of work and academic achievement while incarcerated.

The idea that this elderly Black community leader could be a risk to society outside the prison walls is laughable. Yet Acoli's release does not appear to be on the horizon. He has been consistently denied parole since the early 1990s. His last bid, in February, was again denied. The parole board determined that he should be considered ineligible for another hearing for an extended but unspecified period of time. Acoli will likely not live long enough to appear before the board again.

He is in poor health, as you might expect at his age, after enduring 48 years of prison's effects on the body. His conditions include advancing dementia, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, emphysema, and glaucoma. Acoli survived a serious Covid-19 infection last year, which left him 30 pounds lighter and more infirm.

Even for those who believe in the possibility of justice through carceral punishment — and I do not — Acoli's ongoing imprisonment should be deemed unacceptable. It has long been the case, however, that the criminal legal system denies individuals in Acoli's position even the dregs of earnest due process afforded incarcerated people. He is a former Black Panther, convicted for the killing of a New Jersey state trooper in the same incident that saw the revolutionary Assata Shakur wounded and captured.

The reason he has not been released, according to his longtime friend and supporter the Rev. Lukata Mjumbe, "has been politics." Nearly 50 religious leaders from across New Jersey urged Gov. Phil Murphy to immediately release Acoli last year, when the incarcerated elder was rushed to hospital with Covid-19 complications.

In a recent interview with former political prisoner and Black Panther Marshall "Eddie" Conway, Mjumbe said, "Moving forward, we're not dealing with a focus and a fixation on politics, we're calling for the compassionate release of an 84-year-old man who has been in prison for almost 48 years, who was born in 1937, incarcerated in 1973, who is a grandfather, who is a father, who is sick and who needs to come home."

New Jersey introduced one of the first bills in the country last year to reduce prison sentences during the pandemic. Around 2,600 incarcerated individuals in the state, who were nearing the end of their prison terms, have been released; those convicted of murder were unsurprisingly considered ineligible. Coronavirus-related releases around the country have consistently upheld blunt legal-criminal taxonomies

in determining who should go free, but they fail to account for a number of vulnerable individuals at extremely low risk of re-offending, like Acoli, who nonetheless have been deemed “violent” in perpetuity.

Even without the context of a pandemic, the grounds for freeing the 84-year-old are abundant. It is, however, cases like Acoli’s — and other long-incarcerated Black liberation leaders — that reveal the true nature of a system, in which so-called blue lives matter and Black lives do not.

Calls for Acoli’s release do not focus on the extreme persecution faced by Black liberation fighters at the time of the former Panther’s arrest; they don’t need to. By any measure, he has more than served his time. In 2014, a New Jersey appeals court challenged Acoli’s previous parole denial and ordered his release. The judges wrote, “Acoli has paid the penalty under the laws of this state for his crimes.” A higher court later reversed the ruling.

Powerful police unions fight with near-religious zeal to ensure that “cop killers” never see a day of freedom. Since 2000, eight former Black Panther Party members have died while incarcerated, all at least 10 years younger than Acoli. Following changes to New York parole guidelines and parole board makeup, however, two former Panthers have been granted parole in recent years, both having served over 40 years in prison.

Like Acoli, Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim posed no risk to society and were regarded as mentors by numerous younger people with whom they had served time. They were also the targets of tireless racist and reactionary police union campaigns. Acoli’s fate is determined by a different state’s powers, but the grounds for his long overdue freedom are no less strong.

The same is true of Mumia Abu-Jamal, 66; Russell Maroon Shoatz, 77; and Mutulu Shakur, 70 — all Black elders whose ongoing imprisonments constitute an excess of carceral cruelty. Each of the men has at some point in the last year contracted Covid-19. Shoatz has stage four colon cancer and was reportedly held for 10 days in a gymnasium with 30 other coronavirus-positive detainees who all shared one toilet. Abu-Jamal tested positive for the virus earlier this month; he, too, lost 30 pounds, has congestive heart failure, and a skin condition that has flared up, leaving exposed bloody wounds all over his body.

Laura Whitehorn, co-founder of the Release Aging People in Prison campaign, and herself a former political prisoner, tweeted that Acoli, Abu-Jamal, Shoatz, and Shakur, among others, remain behind bars “while ‘Judas & the Black Messiah wins film awards” — referring to the recent Hollywood depiction of the betrayal and government execution of Black Panther Party Illinois chapter chair, Fred Hampton.

Anyone rightfully horrified on learning of the persecution Hampton faced must reckon with the fact that a number of his contemporaries remain in cages, where, without intervention, they will die. As Whitehorn wrote, “All elders, all ill, should have been released years ago.”

24 Mar - FDC Englewood by Eric King

New writing by Eric below.

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When someone is indicted federally, they are sent to either a private facility, or a Federal detention center (or held in county jail through US Marshal contracts). People indicted in Florence get sent to the Englewood FDC. Right now there are abortion bombers, people called killers, people called gang leaders, but not me. For the last 19 months, the admin or US Marshals (or both) have kept me in SHU (segregated housing unit) with no reason given.

At the FDC pretrial folks get to prepare for trial. They can call their lawyers daily and have in-person visits to review all evidence against them. At the fdc, prisoners have daily access to the law library and can print anything off pertinent to their case. In the SHU I am allowed 1 15 minute phone call per week with my

attorney, we've never had an in-person visit, over a year and a half after being indicted, still haven't been able to review our full discovery of evidence. There is a law library here and if you don't mind filling a written request the guards will get you in there.... HOWEVER printing out documents can take weeks to retrieve, if ever. You will be charged for the paper and then told you never printed anything, maybe try again next week?

Being in the FDC is having a normalized pre-trial experience. You were able to make friends and enemies, use select fitness equipment and shower daily. You get to feel fresh air outside playing basketball or just walking the track. You can call or email your family as much as you like, you have a cell door so you can take a s*** without a guard monitoring your status. Real canteen is available to make your meals or buy songs for your mp3. You get to build bonds with the people around you, hear their stories and share yours. If you get a disciplinary write up you go to SHU you do your time (sanctions, it designated amount of time you will spend in segregation) then you come back, business as usual.

Since I've been back here I've seen the entire SHU get turned over except my neighbor Smiles and I, who has 8 months clear conduct and is spun constantly over his eligibility.... Days ago someone who had masturbated in front of multiple staff members was allowed back for the second time, Smiles and I still wait...

The admin lies over and over, it's a mind game "if you do this, we will reward you" then some other excuse arises. The main excuse is I am a "threat to security" no one cannot explain what this means, this is not a designation. There is no manual I can read to further understand as a threat to security what I'm entitled. Meanwhile we'll continue to wait, fighting a serious legal case while trying to maintain our sanity. The judges and prosecutors will say everything's fine, but I haven't seen the stars in two and a half years.

24 Mar - Kings Bay Plowshares 7 Updates and Writings

The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 prisoners have been prolific in documenting their experiences and thoughts while locked up and we are happy to pass some of those writings along to you. More writings available at kingsbayplowshares7.org

MORE:

March 29th - Freed Up: Martha Hennessy Speaks From Danbury

by Joergen Ostensen (*PrisonsKill*)

Martha Hennessy is a Catholic Worker and longtime peace activist who has fought for the abolition of nuclear weapons. She is currently incarcerated for taking part in a Plowshares Action on April 4th, 2018. The Plowshares Movement is a group of Catholic activists who follow the teaching of the prophet Isaiah heeding the call to "beat swords into Plowshares." There have been over 100 Plowshares Actions since 1980.

Joergen Ostensen (PrisonsKill): Do you want to share a little bit about how you've been doing lately? I know a lot of folks care deeply about you and all the Plowshares Political Prisoners.

Martha Hennessy: Well yeah but we also have to care about all the prisoners who are in the BOP custody. There's 2.3 million prisoners in custody now and the BOP has a budget of \$84 billion annually and this money is, you know, taken from the workers, stolen from the people and used to torment, [to] torture. The injustice is widespread. People are really suffering. This \$84 billion could be used to help these inmates take care of their families. For the most part, me, personally, I'm doing ok. I am struggling with blood pressure because of the stress and the food, the diet is very high carb, high fat. And also the forced bed rest, I am getting outdoors now more. But, you know, we're not given a lot exercises. The Covid pandemic has certainly put a dent in all the organizing and all the programing that you typically see in the prison system. But, you know, back in the '70s prisoners were given rehabilitation, given, you know, a chance to get their diplomas...and the GED program is still here now, but most of the programing that was available for rehabilitation has been stolen, taken away. It's all about profits, it's all about putting the money into the

pockets of a few. And meanwhile, the families, the workers, the addicts—they're all suffering and they need treatment and they need jobs, they need housing.

(Automated interruption "This call is from a federal prison.")

They need education, they need good nutrition. You know the stories that I hear about people's lives, it's just, you know, violence is prevalent in our culture, everybody's childhoods have stories of insane madness. So I'm here, I'm a fool for Christ. I'm here being a fool for Christ, kind of volunteering for this work of mercy. But also trying to take care of myself, float my own little boat, not get tipped over. I'm doing a lot of fabulous reading, people have been sending me great mail, great books. My support system has been, you know, unbelievable. I'm very well taken care of, you know. I am a prisoner of conscience, but I would say that everybody in here is a political prisoner, an economic prisoner.

PK: What sort of connections have you been making between the struggle you're engaging in with the Plowshares and what you've seen in the prison system?

MH: The Plowshares ministry is one of going to the military bases and trying to convert the workers there, the soldiers. And then of course the second part is the courtroom, which Steve Kelly calls "the extension of the Pentagon," ... and we tried to preach the truth there. And then of course the prisons, to visit the prisoners, the ministry here is great, huge. 'The vineyard is huge, the laborers are few.' And walking onto the Kings Bay Naval Base is the same as walking into this Danbury Prison, when I self surrendered December 14th. It's all the different tentacles of the same beast. And you know, it's the same kind of budget, it's the same kind of economy that is robbing the people blind, robbing them into starvation. So yeah Kings Bay Naval Base and Danbury Prison, I'm sorry, similar campuses, similar intentions, similar funding. This journey, this pilgrimage for me, working and volunteering at the Catholic Worker and also participating in the Plowshares Movement, it's all about connecting the dots, it's all about a revolution of the heart. I was out picking up litter this morning outside of the camp here and you know, there's gun blasts going off like mad. There's a shooting range here. And all I could think of was WOW, the Proud Boys on steroids with an unlimited budget and a licence to kill. You know, that's what we've got on our hands and we've got to really come to grips. You know, we're now in the Lenten season, we've got to come to grips with our empire that is based on genocide, slavery, misogyny, you name it. I don't know, I could go on and on. One book that I recently read was called Democracy In Chains by Nancy MacLean and that just really lays out how Brown v. The Board of Education is just on a continuum with what we've got now, with what happened in Charlottesville in August of two years ago and what happened January 6th in Washington D.C.. This is all of a cloth, this is all of a very hideous tapestry that we really have to pay attention to and you pull one thread and you've got this whole Pandora's Box. And of course, the nuclear weapons, the nuclear arsenal, is the kingpin of the whole white supremacy system. And the environment is victimized, women and children are victimized, we're all victimized. Everybody on all sides are victimized. And you know, we're fed this dream of, you know, wanting to be like the Trump family, wanting to be rich and powerful and it's all a mirage. It's unsustainable. We're all tired of it. (She laughs).

PK: Yeah and you mention "coming to grips," like our society needs to come to grips with some of these evils. I imagine to a certain extent being incarcerated sort of helps you, like personally, to come to grips with and fully grasp like the totality of the system we live in. Would you like to speak more to what being inside has done to your imagination or conception of this country?

MH: Well I've been 'freed up.' To forfeit my own personal freedom has freed me up to think more clearly. You know, walking onto that military base, you know the system would like everybody to believe that it's no different than walking onto a used car lot and cutting a padlock.

(Automated interruption "This call is from a federal prison.")

We really need to look at the reality and the truth. And for me, you know, I can volunteer at the Catholic Worker, I can go out and speak, and none of that is really possible without prayer, without giving oneself

over to the will of God. What does God want me to do with my voice, with my body, with my spirit, with my mind? Coming here is all part of that journey, learning, learning, going into the belly of the beast and learning what we really are truly all about. We can't walk this walk without tolerance, without flexibility and not everyone's cut out to do this work, not everybody's cut out to do a Plowshares action. Each of us is given our own talents. But I cannot do certain parts of this work without doing certain other parts of this work. And it requires humility. I just can't tell you what it's like to have the ultimate freedom. Another book that I read was Solitary by Albert Woodfox, [who was locked up at] Angola. And he would have these fits of claustrophobia, and you know he was literally boxed in for decades.

PK: Forty years (of solitary confinement).

MH: Yep. Forty years and his spirit stayed alive. You know I think about people like Ben Salmon, what was done to him and to his body, he died young because of it, what was done to Jägerstätter. You know, we have so many examples of those that have gone before us who have forfeited their physical freedom and yet have found incredible spiritual and moral freedom.

PK: So it's about two weeks now, until it will be the third anniversary of April 4th, 2018, when you all acted in Kings Bay. (Beeps tell us we have one minute left) Do you want to just speak for a moment about where we are now?

MH: Yeah the third anniversary of the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven action is coming up. Let's keep in mind that Fr. Steve Kelly is still in custody three years later. He's more than served his time at this point, but you know. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of our best prophets and saints, what he has to offer us is so desperately needed still. So let us keep up the struggle, let us keep loving one another and let's keep making sure that this revolution is a revolution free of any kind of violence and oppression.

March 31st - Leg Irons and Handcuffs by Patrick O'Neill **A Health Concern**

On Tuesday, March 15, I was standing in my cubicle talking to my friend Mike and my cubemate Mark. Suddenly, I started feeling very hot and I took off my long-sleeved shirt and hung it up. But I kept feeling hotter and weaker, so I sat down on the seat at the desk in my cube. I started to feel even worse, like I might pass out, so I got on the floor with my back against Mark's bottom bunk. Mark got me some water and I perked up a little, but was still wavering. Mark noticed my T-shirt was soaked in sweat. Three other guys walked by and noticed I was sick. Mark said I looked pale. Finally, Paul, my friend, said I should go to medical, so I walked to my counselor's office (Mr. Marshall) and told him.

Elkton Medical

Medical came with a golf cart to carry me across the compound. By now I was feeling a little better and I was able to walk down the 24 steps and outside to the golf cart. At medical, they hooked up a heart monitor. There were about 4 women RNs and a male nurse. They seemed alarmed, and said I had a heart flutter. They brought a printout of the monitor to a doctor who was somewhere else (I actually never saw the doctor). She or he recommended I be transferred to the hospital. For a while, I was trembling with the shivers. The shaking went on for 10 minutes or more, but I had no pain of any kind and no longer felt sick as if I were going to pass out. When a private ambulance arrived, I had a set of leg irons attached to my ankles. Except for a 20-min. stress test on a treadmill, those leg irons remained on my ankles until I was brought back to Elkton 4 days later. I transferred to the ambulance gurney and was wheeled out of the prison for the 45-or so- minute ride to Trumbull Regional Medical Center.

Handcuffs and Leg Irons

On the journey, I was in handcuffs and leg irons. A guard sat in the back of the ambulance with me. He was armed with a handgun, and said, "If you try to escape, I will shoot you, and it will hurt very much." I got the impression he said this to every prisoner he escorted to the hospital. From that moment on, I was held under an armed guard and a second guard at all times while in the hospital. Both guards (they were working 8-12 hr. shifts over the 4 days) would be with me at all times. I can't imagine what all the other people (not

staff) thought of me, but I'm sure they never expected that I was a nonviolent peace activist. Back in my room, I was always in chains, never allowed to get out of bed. I was in Rm 402 in the cardiac unit. Once in bed, the guard would use a thick steel chain and padlock to attach my leg irons to the foot of my bed. Another chain and lock were used to attach my left arm to the bed by attaching the chain to the handcuffs. This arrangement made for very uncomfortable sleeping attempts.

Tangled Up in Bed Chains

The guards, some of whom were working overtime for hospital duty, were making close to \$50 an hour to "guard me." All that was required of them was to watch TV, play on their phones and sleep. While I met several guards who treated me with dignity and respect, there were others who wanted nothing to do with me. When I asked a guard to unchain me so I could use the bathroom, he replied, "Do you have to do number 2?" It was expected that I use a plastic hand-held urinal if I had to do No. 1! One of my low points was when I woke up in the middle of the night needing to urinate. Not wanting to wake the guards, I used the plastic urinal. Either I was too sleepy to concentrate or just too tangled up in my bed chains, but when I was done, I realized most of the urine had soaked the bedding and my hospital gown. Rather than create a scene, I decided to try to go back to sleep in a urine-soaked bed. The Federal Bureau of Prisons should not be allowed to chain nonviolent prisoners to their beds. It should be deemed a human rights violation. Elkton FCI is a "low security" prison and the vast majority of the men are nonviolent and represent no threat to escape. In addition, a prisoner charged with escape will likely have years added to his sentence, which is more than enough reason to deter escapes. I have not been able to document even an "attempted" escape from Elkton FCI. The men at Elkton want to do their time and get out; escape is out of the question.

Heart Issues

During my hospital stay I had an ultrasound of my heart, another test where I was under a giant machine for 15 minutes that took pictures of my heart. There were also problems. My cardiologist at the hospital, Dr. Woods, who also works for the prison, never received any of the initial test results from the prison when my heart was acting up. The tests showed my heart was fine (except that my sleeping pulse drops under 40, which is what it's always done – I assume because I'm a runner). Dr. Woods wanted to inject me with a chemical that would artificially cause my heart rate to rise rather than allow me on the treadmill. I refused that test unless I was allowed to actually use the treadmill to get my heart rate above 132 beats. I desperately wanted to have my legs out of the leg irons for a short time and I just saw no reason to have my heart rate chemically raised. Woods agreed to my request, but kept me in the hospital for an extra day. Following the stress test on the treadmill, Woods said the results showed that I had some blockage and I might need a heart catheterization. All this news seemed odd to me since I was walking and running more than 50 miles a week all the time I have been at Elkton! Woods put me under the giant camera for an additional 15 minutes and that re-test showed no heart abnormality. Woods ruled out the catheterization, but he wanted to do yet another test that involved injecting me with dye and going under the giant camera for a third time. Luckily, Woods did get a second opinion from a woman cardiologist who was an expert in some other aspect of the heart. (I had her name, but my 6 pages of personal notes from the hospital were confiscated by a guard and I don't expect to get them back.) This doctor didn't want to directly contradict Woods, but she also did not get to see the paperwork from the prison exam (when I was initially seen). It was her hunch that my illness was likely caused by a sudden drop in my blood pressure that she attributed to a new prescription I was recently given for high blood pressure. She seemed confident my heart was working OK. So, I refused the last test, spent a third night chained to my bed, and came back to prison on Friday afternoon 3-18. At one point, a nurse at the hospital said I was going to receive an injection of some drug to keep me from getting blood clots in my legs because I was staying in the bed all the time! There was, of course, no reason for me to be in bed in the first place! And certainly not in chains. I refused the drug.

Normalized evil

The practice of chaining "offenders" to hospital beds is not unique to federal prisons. This is a common practice by most – if not all – jails and prisons. At Wake Med, where I work as a volunteer chaplain, I often see police and correctional officers in patients' rooms. Women who deliver babies while incarcerated have their newborns taken away from them. This practice is ungodly and cruel to both mother and child. To

engage in this kind of practice, the jails and prisons must have the cooperation of the hospital administration. Such cruel practices seem to me to be in direct opposition to the Hippocratic Oath, which states, “Do no harm.” Most of the time, when a nurse came into my room, she would kindly ask, “Is everybody OK?” She was, of course, speaking to me and my captors. Sometimes I would reply: “I’m OK except for these chains on my arm and legs.” Unfortunately, the practice of chaining people to their beds is just normal procedure to hospital staff; it goes on without any question about its cruelty. The worst kind of evil there is is the kind of evil that becomes “normal” in the eyes of otherwise “good” people. These are the hardest kinds of evil to abolish. A heartfelt campaign to abolish this practice would be a great humanitarian undertaking by all of you reading this account.

Back in Quarantine

When I got back to the prison, I was immediately strip-searched and taken to the SHU (Special Housing Unit, better known as solitary confinement). In the SHU, I was strip-searched a second time while locked in a steel cage in handcuffs. (That’s where the guard took away my hospital discharge papers and my 6 pages of notes.) I am now locked in a single cell with one small barred window with cloudy glass so I cannot see the outside world. I was put here straight out of the hospital and the door to my cell has remained locked and unopened for parts of 5 days. My food and “hygiene” (a razor once a week, which is 2 inches long and must be returned because the razor is a potential weapon, toilet paper, 2 inch toothbrush, liquid soap) are slid in through a door slot. My pen is about 4 inches long and made of rubber. I go through ink very quickly! I am allowed one hour of recreation per week; I have not received it yet. I am in solitary ostensibly because of Covid. This is supposed to be a quarantine for 2 weeks. However, the SHU is the prison’s disciplinary unit, so I am being held under the same conditions as someone who punched a guard or inmate (or worse). I’m experiencing the same terrible circumstances as everyone else in the SHU. In the compound, many buildings are closed and have not been used in more than a year because the prison has been locked down. Any one of those buildings could be used as a far more humane place to quarantine. But prisoners have no power to bring change. Everything that happens here is decided by the warden, who is the king of this terrible place. The lockdown means inmates have no visits, no library time, no indoor recreation (very few men go out to “Rec” in the snow and cold with the only option to walk or run), which is very unhealthy, no religious activities or services (the Catholic inmates have had no Mass or Eucharist and this will be the second Easter with no service), no 12-step programs. In my unit (FB or Fox Bravo), there are about 115-120 men in a room with 64 cubicles of bunkbeds. We are all locked in this room 24-7 with constant noise, continuous movement, and no privacy. It is like existing in a giant Ms. Pacman maze full of human beings.

Evil Sacred Cows

Some of the men in this room have been here for more than 10 years, many have 10 years to go! And almost all for charges that warranted placement in a “low security” prison that has cubicles instead of cells. That means the Bureau of Prisons finds all the men in Elkton are low risk for any kind of violence, which begs the question – why are they here? Why didn’t they get compassionate home confinement due to Covid? Why didn’t they get some alternative sentence to years in prison? Answer: because the U.S. Prison-Industrial-Complex is a self-perpetuating institution that employs thousands of people doing unnecessary jobs, such as watching TV in Patrick’s hospital room. The BOP, CIA, and the Pentagon are all evil sacred cows that exist without accountability in the U.S. Empire. Incidentally, I have still not received the Covid vaccine and I turned 65 on March 27.

A Word of Gratitude

I want to express great gratitude to all of you who are keeping Mary and me in your prayers, and a special thanks to 2-time Plowshares activist and retired school teacher Marcia Timmel, who is helping Mary Evelyn with online school so Mary can go to work part-time. And, of course, thanks to the Kings Bay Plowshares support team who have helped us so much as we near our 3rd anniversary of the action, and Steve Dear, Mark Davidson, Erik Johnson, Bill Ofenloch and Mary for all your love and support.

April 2nd - March 31 court hearing for Fr. Steve Kelly, S.J.

by Felice Cohen-Joppa (*The Nuclear Resister*)

On March 30, the day Fr. Steve Kelly, S.J. arrived at FDC SeaTac after three and a half months of transport from the county jail in Brunswick, Georgia, his Tacoma, WA attorney Blake Kremer was given less than a 24 hour notice that Steve was to have a preliminary court hearing on Wednesday, March 31.

Last summer, Steve postponed his Kings Bay Plowshares sentencing in Georgia until he could appear in person in the courtroom, as is his right and something that is important to him (due to COVID, court was taking place virtually, by secure video). And after three and a half months in transport, he arrived in the Western District of Washington only to learn that the Tacoma federal court is currently only doing virtual hearings by video. Because of Steve's intention to appear in person, he waived his appearance and was represented by his attorney. The stated purpose of the hearing, which lasted 30 minutes, was to advise Steve re: terms of probation.

The alleged violations being addressed by the court:

1. Failing to report to the probation office as instructed, on or about September 6, 2017, in violation of a standard condition of probation. (part of his sentence for a line crossing at the Bangor Trident nuclear submarine base)
2. Committing the offense of conspiracy, destruction of property on naval installation, depredation of government property, and trespass on or about April 5, 2018, in violation of a mandatory condition.
3. Entering military property on or about April 5, 2018, in violation of a special condition.

He faces a possible six months imprisonment for these violations.

Magistrate Judge David Christel then said he would set a preliminary date for Steve to appear in person to hear the alleged violations and enter his response.

Blake asked, since Steve was stipulating to the legal violations, if they could move forward with expedited sentencing that day. He also pointed out that if his client were present, he would say that these alleged violations were religious acts and acts of conscience.

The judge asked Ms. Sievers, U.S. Attorney, if she thought the stipulation was enough to proceed with expedited sentencing. She argued that it was not. She pointed out that there were 13 days until they hit the max of Fr. Kelly's possible six month sentence on April 13 (given the time Steve has served after the conclusion of his Kings Bay Plowshares sentence). She suggested setting a hearing for that date.

Blake then said that Steve has already been in prison for three years, and suggested that it would be reasonable for the court to say that it has enough information to close this case today, and not consume further court resources by having another hearing.

Mr. Johnson from the probation department then spoke up about what he identified as "a bit of a quagmire": Fr. Kelly still has a term of supervised release that he must adhere to in Georgia, and was not providing an address of where he would be living (a requirement of supervised release).

The judge replied that there are some complications, with another federal court having an active case pending.

Blake pointed out that while this does present additional problems, they are the Southern District of Georgia's problems, and with his client so close to maxing out his sentence here in Washington, they are not problems of this court.

Magistrate Judge Christel asked Mr. Johnson if probation would have a recommendation prior to the 4/13 hearing. Mr. Johnson replied that he already had a recommendation, that Steve be ordered to live in a halfway house and continue to be supervised by the court.

The judge then set another hearing on April 13 at 10 a.m. It will likely be virtual again, conducted by video, but he said he would find out if a very limited in-person hearing would be possible by then, so that Fr. Kelly could appear in the same courtroom as him.

Blake spent the rest of the day working with U.S. probation and their post-release unit, advocating that Steve could not be ordered by this court to live in a halfway house, when he had served his maximum sentence. Blake explained that ordering Steve to do anything would be without purpose as the court could no longer unsuspend any of Steve's sentence, having forced him to serve it already in entirety. The following morning the probation office agreed, changing their position, writing: "We will be recommending Father Kelly's term of probation to be revoked and he be sentenced to time served with no option for supervision to follow."

In the meantime, Steve is in quarantine for two weeks.

24 Mar - 'United States vs. Reality Winner' Review: Doc Defends the Whistleblower Who Leaked Russian Election Interference

Sonia Kennebeck's engrossing documentary charts the case of an unlikely, low-level document leaker who provoked the full wrath of the Trump administration.

MORE:

by Dennis Harvey (*Variety*)

A sense of rising U.S. governmental secrecy and punishment of whistleblowers is the primary political takeaway from "United States vs. Reality Winner." Sonia Kennebeck's documentary chronicles the incarceration and trial of the titular young intelligence specialist who leaked an NSA document revealing Russian attempts at interfering in the 2016 U.S. elections — intel the Trump administration was evidently keen on suppressing.

That her leakage of classified materials to media became the sole, punitive focus of prosecution, shutting out the issue of citizens' need to know, provides the central moral conundrum here. But the film mostly backs away from a bigger picture of international espionage and possible Stateside collusion to focus on the personal level of Winner's family, as her forced silence behind bars makes them her principal advocates. It's an involving, empathetic if one-sided portrait whose limited insight into still-incendiary issues may actually smooth passage to broadcast, streaming and other platforms after its SXSW premiere.

Reality Winner (yes, that is her birth name) is a Texas native who, as seen in old home movies, was studious, adventurous and altruistic from an early age. She declined a Fulbright scholarship to enlist in the Air Force, getting decorated during six years' service for work as a cryptologic linguist aiding long-distance in Afghanistan drone activities. In 2016 she was honorably discharged, her continuing top security clearance snagging a translating job in Augusta, Ga., for private NSA contractor Pluribus.

It was there in early 2017 that she was shocked by an office-circulated intelligence report confirming rumored Russian cyber-warfare intrusions into local U.S. voting infrastructures during the prior election year. She copied and anonymously sent it to New York-based online journalistic platform *The Intercept*, which had already reported on Obama-era NSA intel leaked by Edward Snowden. Nearly four months later, in early June, she was arrested — and has remained in custody ever since.

It's been argued that *The Intercept* itself carelessly expedited that arrest by returning the document for verification to the NSA, which soon determined where and by whom it was copied. In any case, the 25-year-old found her home surrounded by 11 mostly-armed FBI agents who nonetheless played "good cop" in posing as her allies, coaxing a confession without reading her Miranda Rights or conveying the gravity of the situation. That exchange, released as audio to the filmmakers last month (though actors are used to voice parts of the transcript as well), constitutes a running thread.

The documentary's remaining bulk is a chronological account of Winner's long initial incarceration (she was repeatedly denied bail), trial and subsequent sentence, plus her family members' constant support both privately and in the media.

We only hear Winner herself in phone calls with those relatives. Until the case (to which she ultimately pled guilty) was over, she and her attorneys were prevented from speaking publicly. As a federal prisoner now, she remains equally constrained. Her sentence was the longest ever imposed in U.S. Federal court for a similar crime. It is noted that the hitherto-rare charging of whistleblowers under the 1917 Espionage Act greatly increased during the Obama regime. (Jon Kiriakou, Thomas Drake and Edward Snowden are interviewed here, the last still living under political asylum in Moscow.) Of four cases in which persons were arrested for leaking classified intel under Trump, three were related to Russia.

The elephant in the room here is whether our government is using the law to muzzle whistleblowers releasing information it shouldn't be concealing anyway. The report Winner leaked has since become publicly available, and there's no evidence its disclosure harmed national security. Ergo the harsh justice dealt her is hard to interpret as anything but a means to intimidate and silence future Reality Winners.

She remains an enigma here, not just because she can't be interviewed, but because the primary focus on her understandably distraught, admirably pro-active family members paints too limited a personality picture. Supporters feel she was victimized by deliberate misrepresentation as some sort of "America-hating" radical. But we could use greater clarification of statements she made, whether in joking or otherwise, that were easily exploited by conservative politicians and pundits to make her appear so. (It would have also provided contextualizing background to survey reactions from Trump's general base.) The film conveys that she was young, idealistic, perhaps reckless, while sidestepping her actual political beliefs. There's no question, however, that powerful foes deliberately buried her stellar military service and other résumé items — plus the stolen document's discomfiting content — to tar her.

Winner's stepfather comments that such targeting of civilians who expose unpleasant government intel could theoretically happen to any American. "United States" is fortunate in that its subjects' relatives are particularly articulate and relatable fellow citizens, as are most of the other voices here. Snowden, in particular, sums up the larger issues at stake in commandingly vivid terms. That whistleblowers generally benefit society is underlined by the news that Winner's leakage directly led to stepped-up precautions that made the 2020 U.S. election the most secure on record.

Kennebeck ("National Bird") does not disguise an advocacy stance, though closing text notes relevant governmental officials and agencies stonewalled all participation requests. As in her Toronto-premiered "Enemies of the State" last year, reenactments are discreetly utilized, mostly providing visual content during excerpts from the subject's original FBI questioning. Maxine Goedicke's editorial assembly is well-judged, other major contributions ditto. For all that "United States vs. Reality Winner" illuminates, there remain plenty of questions left over one hopes the MIA protagonist will be free to answer at last after her expected release late this year.

25 Mar - Judge dismisses kidnapping charge against leaders of Denver protests

With heaviest charge thrown out, the fight continues for the activists to defeat remaining charges.

MORE:

On March 25, 2021, after over nine hours of testimony at a preliminary hearing, Adams County Court Judge Leroy Kirby dismissed the First Degree Attempted Kidnapping charge against Lillian House, Joel Northam, and Eliza Lucero of the Party for Socialism and Liberation ("PSL"). This represents a major step forward in the defense against the political prosecution levied by Aurora police and prosecutors against the leaders of peaceful demonstrations in Aurora this past summer demanding justice for Elijah McClain. The defendants could have faced 12-24 years in prison for this single charge if convicted.

At the preliminary hearing, the prosecution provided no evidence that any of these protestors committed any act of violence, or barricaded any entrance, to the police station on July 3 and 4, 2020, during a protest at the APD District 1 substation. Judge Kirby was clear in his ruling that PSL actively discouraged any unlawful action. Further, officers had freedom of movement during the entirety of the protest and in fact sequestered themselves inside the police station by order of their commanding officers.

It is very rare for charges to be dismissed at a preliminary hearing. Unlike a trial, the prosecution's burden of proof is much lower and the judge can consider evidence that would not be allowed at a trial, such as hearsay. Even given this extraordinarily low burden, Judge Kirby found that there was no probable cause for the attempted kidnapping charge, and moreover, stated that had the arrest affidavit come to him for review, he would not have authorized the case to even begin.

Ms. Lucero, Mr. Northam, and Ms. House have been deeply involved in bringing public attention and scrutiny to the Aurora Police Department's killing of Elijah McClain and subsequent coverup of APD's illegal actions. Based in large part on Ms. House's, Mr. Northam's, and Ms. Lucero's words and actions throughout the Summer of 2020 (and in the year prior), the mass, peaceful movement for justice for Elijah McClain has brought significant local and national attention to these exceptionally important issues of police brutality and racial injustice and to force open the investigations into APD and the killing of Elijah McClain.

28 Mar - Updates on Mumia Abu-Jamal

As his 67th birthday nears, and Pennsylvania political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal faces challenging and potentially fatal health crises, his legal case is still slowly winding its way through the arduous appellate court system.

MORE:

March 28th - The Only Treatment is Freedom: Mumia Abu-Jamal and COVID

by Johanna Fernández (*Verso*)

Three weeks ago, on Friday, February 26, 2021 Mumia Abu-Jamal called Pam Africa, the person largely responsible for keeping alive the movement to save and free him for 40 years. Mumia told her that he was certain he had COVID-19; that he was having difficulty breathing as well as chest pressure and pain.

Within two hours of that call, the movement to free Mumia mobilized hundreds of supporters to call the prison and the Philadelphia District Attorney's office to demand immediate medical care for Mumia and his immediate release.

Tried and true, the call-to-action worked. The next day guards entered the imprisoned radio journalist's cell and without notice, escorted him to the prison infirmary. On Monday, Mumia's attorneys inquired about their client's health with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections attorney who reported that Mumia had been tested for COVID over the weekend and the results were negative. None of us had heard from Mumia directly, however.

Amid tension, worry and stress (Pam Africa's blood pressure shot up near the 200s), the movement issued a press release and prepared for a press conference in front of the DA's office that Wednesday, March 3. We emphasized that Mumia reported serious COVID symptoms including chest pain— despite the negative test results reported by the prison. Near the end of the press conference, which was being streamed-live on YouTube, Mumia's attorney Bob Boyle phoned saying that the PA DOC attorney reported that a fourth test came back positive. Mumia had COVID 19.

But the PA DOC attorney failed to paint a full picture of the situation to Mumia's attorneys. A clear sense of what happened emerged minutes after the conclusion of the dramatic press conference. Mumia happened to call from the prison infirmary as we were breaking down our impromptu stage; and there—in front of the Philadelphia DA's office—he shared what actually happened: the day after he spoke with Pam Africa,

guards came to Mumia's cell and escorted him first to the infirmary and then to the hospital where doctors determined that he had water in his lungs and throughout his body. During four-days of hospitalization, the doctors informed him that he had COVID and Congestive Heart Failure and that ten pounds of fluid had been drawn from his lungs and body. As he was painting a picture of what he underwent, I thought of connecting him to his chosen doctor, who asked if he felt that he had been treated compassionately in the hospital. Mumia responded with a rote yes, said that he felt better, but emphasized that the most sobering challenge before him was to have to once again attempt to get a handle on the other crisis, the Job-like skin condition of biblical proportion that disfigured his entire body with open sores everywhere five years ago and that was back.

On another call, days later, Mumia's breath was labored. When the imprisoned Black Panther called, I asked if he thought he was having a COVID relapse. He said, "nah, I think it's my skin, it feels like my entire body is on fire." When I suggested that he might need to be hospitalized to address this intractable, severe and debilitating chronic skin condition, the tension in Mumia's famously calm voice jumped a few notches. He said that he couldn't go back to the hospital. Mumia's reaction resembled that of Complex-PTSD. I moved slowly in the conversation to try to understand what was going on. I suggested that he might have to be re-hospitalized for his skin condition. It was then that Mumia recoiled, saying that he couldn't go back to the hospital. Recognizing from the sound of his voice that I was entering sensitive territory, I probed. Mumia had spoken to his wife, to Pam and to me numerous times in two weeks, but it took a trigger to reveal a situation that was hard to hear.

In the approximately five minutes remaining of this timed, monitored and frequently interrupted prison call, I learned that per Department of Correction protocol, this sixty-six-year-old man diagnosed with COVID and Congestive Heart Failure, undergoing diareases and with an infernal skin condition, was shackled to the bed for four days during his recent hospitalization. He explained that while he had wounds all over his body, the bloody wound of his lower leg — captured in the photo taken by the nurse at the prison infirmary upon his discharge— he got from the shackles that dug into his already raw skin during the entirety of his four day stay in the hospital. He added that the nurse missed the ones on his other leg and the ones on his lower arms.

The movement decided to release photographs taken of Mumia upon his arrival at the prison infirmary from the hospital. The photo of the bloody wound on Mumia's lower leg caused by the shackling and another showing Mumia with bloodshot eyes, noticeably gaunt —he had lost 30LBS — looking at the camera with gut-wrenching vulnerability.

The practice of shackling incarcerated people is commonplace across the United States. In fact, it is ordained by politicians and corrections "professionals" of all stripes who've been riding the coattails of Black Lives Matters denouncing White Supremacy in the public square but enforcing it in the daily practices of their institutions. Recall that Jacob Blake was shackled to a hospital bed after police in Kenosha had shot and paralyzed him from the waist down. Police unshackled him only after protesters exposed the gross injustice. In each of these cases, authorities cynically justify their inhumanity with a supposed concern for safety. But, if safety is the measure of their actions, why do they insist on holding old men and women who pose no threat to society in their COVID infected prisons? Safety is camouflage and pretext for the practice of authoritarian control that daily erodes standards of freedom for everybody in society.

Loud and clear are the echoes of slavery, which —as Eric Williams shows in *Capitalism and Slavery* — for the first time in human history produced the global distribution and mass use of handcuffs, shackles and fetters because after all, enslaved Africans had to be brought to heel.

The inhumanity of the COVID crisis —and its spread in the prisons, which are now death traps — is eye-opening for those in close proximity to it. And Mumia is not alone in his suffering. When 77-year-old Russell Maroon Shoatz, a Pennsylvania political prisoner with stage-four colon cancer, was diagnosed with COVID, medical staff sent him to a small, cold, dank prison gymnasium where others with COVID were

being quarantined under inhumane conditions. When Maroon arrived, he was greeted by 29 other senior prisoners who said to him: "Welcome, we've been waiting for you, we figured it wasn't long before you got it too." In these already cramped quarters, 30 elderly men with COVID had access to one bathroom stall. In a phone call with his daughter, Theresa Shoatz, Maroon reported that because his corner of the gym had no light, he had to go to the bathroom on himself because under his condition he couldn't risk getting up and falling. As Dr. Ricardo Alvarez stated, for Mumia, Maroon and many others, "the only treatment is freedom."

The decision of most governors to hold prisoners captive under these conditions, and their refusal to decarcerate even during a pandemic, is a crime against humanity. They underscore America's entrenched commitment to racist barbarity. In the last 40 years, US incarcerated people have grown old serving life or decades-long terms in an indefensible system committed to excessive and draconian sentencing. Today's reality has turned US prisons into cruel, old people's homes for poor Black and Brown workers warehoused at the height of urban deindustrialization in the 1980s and 1990s, when American capitalism could not employ large swaths of city dwellers.

But these tortuous conditions aren't the only problem. It's about Americans' right to know how society's most powerless are treated, for in the end that's a barometer of how we are all going to be treated. Arbitrary, whimsical, and sometimes deliberately deadly decisions are made daily by prison officials and corrections officers. Like so much in government bureaucracy, decisions that carry enormous weight in how we act as a society are vested in the hands of a few who are ill-equipped to decide public policy but are all too eager to wield their limited power to inflict cruelty on the prisoners they view as less than human.

That's why at the very least, prison reform organizers and abolitionists are demanding the release of aging people in prison (RAPP) over the age of 50 or with pre-existing conditions, who face premature death if they contract the flu, cancer, hepatitis, pneumonia, COVID-19 or congestive heart disease, as in Abu-Jamal's case. The only humane recourse is to let elderly and vulnerable prisoners go home. Ultimately, we want a society in which social problems are not solved with carceral repression.

The inextricable link between incarceration and standards of democracy in a country led the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky to observe that, "The degree of civilization in society can be judged by entering its prisons."

Mumia spent 28.5 years in the absolute isolation of death row, without the ability to touch another person. In 2011, a federal court overturned that sentence arguing that it was unconstitutionally imposed on Mumia. In 2018, six boxes of new evidence in his case emerged. One of those boxes contained a letter penned by Robert Chobert, the original prosecutor's star witness in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. In that letter, Robert Chobert asks then Assistant District Attorney Joe McGill, where's my money and what do you need me to sign for me to get it. This suggests what we've known all along—that Robert Chobert—like other witnesses—was bribed by the prosecutor to finger then award-winning radio journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal as the shooter of a white police officer in Philadelphia. This year marks the 40th year of his incarceration. It's time to bring Mumia, and all sixties-era political prisoners, home.

29 Mar - RIP Chip Fitzgerald

After 51 years in a cage, political prisoner Chip Fitzgerald died in prison, another elder who succumbed following medical negligence and neglect by the state. Below, you will find our statement on Chip's death as well as those of others.

MORE:

March 30th - NYC ABC Statement on Death of Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald

We are saddened and angered by the death that Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald suffered behind bars. Chip was a parent, grandparent, uncle, mentor, and Black Panther. He was held for 51 years which makes him one of

the longest serving political prisoners anywhere in the world. Chip was continually denied both adequate medical care and compassionate release, though he clearly posed no threat to anyone. Chip became eligible for parole in 1976, and was partially paralyzed by a stroke in 1998. It is obvious to us that even by the inhumane logic of the carceral system he had over-served his sentence by decades, and was only being kept inside out of spite for his active participation in the ongoing struggle for Black Liberation.

The fact that neither the pandemic raging through California prisons nor Chip's own failing health moved the corrupt powers-that-be to release him proves the callousness with which they regard the lives of Black people, not to mention the emptiness of their "progressive" posturing.

We honor Chip for his years of sacrifice and dedication. Even as we mourn his loss we celebrate the struggle for which he gave his life.

The Struggle continues...Until All are Free!

March 31st - In Memory of Black Panther Romaine Chip Fitzgerald

by *Abolition Media Worldwide*

Militant brother Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald has died in prison after being locked up for over 51 years in California. He was 71 years old. We share these memories of his life to pay homage to this brave fighter.

It was the mid-sixties and the world seemed on fire with activism. Having had considerable contact with prisoners who had formed reading groups and subsequently read extensively about the Black movement, Chip quickly developed a sense of the importance of Black history and Black culture and of the long term impact of racism on the Black community. In 1967, while serving time, Chip encountered literature about the Black Panther Party and decided to investigate further. He and scores of other prisoners immediately noticed the Party's desire to struggle for Black freedom and they were outraged to discover that racism was the result of ignorance and greed. He also began to understand how capitalism undermined the legitimate demands of people seeking freedom and justice. Heartened by what he learned, Chip took himself through a process of reevaluation and concluded he no longer aspired to be involved in the streets. Instead, he made the decision to devote his life to the freedom struggle and to the ideals for which organizations like the Black Panther Party stood. Upon his release from jail in early 1969, he and a group of fellow prisoners from DVI, joined the Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Tired of seeing racism prevent poor and oppressed people from exercising their human right to self-determination, Chip enthusiastically delved into community work assigned him by local Black Panther Party leaders. From education and housing initiatives to selling the Black Panther Party newspaper and serving kid's free breakfasts, he became enthralled with the positive work of refashioning his community from one that was oppressed, excluded and subservient to one that was self-determining and self-sufficient.

Bruce Richard, a union executive who in 1969 joined the Black Panther Party's Southern California Chapter with Chip, recalled that, "Upon Chip's release from jail, he wasted no time joining the Black Panther Party. Chip worked tirelessly in various capacities in the Westside office of the Chapter. To be a Panther was a 24/7 commitment, and every single day seemed like weeks due to the volume of activities during that explosive period. Chip was totally consumed by his work in the Party's Free Breakfast Program, the tutorial program, selling Panther papers, attending political education classes and distributing leaflets throughout the community that explained the philosophy and objectives of the Black Panther Party. He was a favorite of many in the communities we served. The children especially loved him, as was often reflected in their smiling little faces when he appeared."

Like many BPP members, Chip learned political principles, the importance of organizational discipline, and the proper handling and use firearms. He identified with the ideology of armed struggle and it's revolutionary potential. His commitment and fervor came to a head when the pig Leslie Clapp, a California Highway Patrolman, stopped him and two other Panthers as they drove across town to expropriate funds for their work. The Panthers defended themselves and at the end, Officer Clapp lay on the ground gravely wounded and Chip bled profusely from a gunshot wound to the head.

Chip managed to remain at large for several weeks until his arrest for the September 1969 killing of a Los Angeles-area security guard. Two weeks after this incident, the police located and arrested Chip, who at the time still wore the bandage from having been shot by the California Highway Patrolman. A kangaroo court in state of California tried and convicted him for this incident and a second murder. During this fatal incident, Chip was intervening in an ongoing armed confrontation between the security guard and another member of the Black Panther Party. Within a few years, the state of California ruled the death penalty unconstitutional and relocated Chip from San Quentin's Death Row to that prison's now infamous Adjustment Center.

Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald spent 21 years of his life on this side of the walls, and 51 years in a cage for fighting for the liberation of people. We mourn that he was not able to achieve freedom at the end of his life, and commit to the struggle ever more diligently in his memory.

March 31st - Regarding The Farewell Of Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald

On Behalf Of The Family & Committee To Free Chip

On Sunday, March 28, 2021, at 3:04 p.m., our brother, uncle, cousin, comrade and friend, Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, joined the ancestors. For a week, he lay barely conscious in a Los Angeles hospital as he struggled to extend his life after suffering a massive stroke in California's gulag known as Lancaster. Chip's strength and dedication to life remained intact as he defied those doctors who said he would not make it through the night in the hours after his initial arrival at the hospital. A stalwart soldier, he fought until his very last breath. Chip died as he had lived: fighting.

Among the government's many victims, Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald was a member of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles. Incarcerated since 1969, he grew old in prison and was disabled many years ago by an earlier, less lethal stroke. Like millions of Black youth during the sixties, Chip, at the age of 17, joined the freedom struggle as the social justice movement rapidly expanded to include massive numbers of urban youth. The government's conduct towards Chip proves that important elements of our society are guided by an irrational tradition that values vengeance over justice or reconciliation. This failure demonstrates the nation's unwillingness to fully acknowledge historic wrongs perpetrated against Black Americans.

Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald was a social justice activist and it is inhumane to imprison activists for 50 years or more, particularly while others convicted of comparable crimes have served significantly less time. A closer look reveals the only differences between those serving shorter sentences and those serving longer ones are the political beliefs & affiliations some had with social justice groups like the Black Panther Party.

Chip never compromised, though he continued to the end to seek redress for this egregious wrong by working with his lawyer, family and defense committees to end his half century nightmare of a slow death behind bars. For us the living, Chip's passing is a lesson to keep fighting the good fight. To give when perhaps it's hard to give. And to live when perhaps life seems so empty. Chip's life did not leave us without a clear message. During his final days in the hospital, the authorities felt the need to chain and shackle Chip to his bed. Despite the fact that he was hardly conscious, they saw this demeaning action as necessary. What they failed to understand is that you can neither jail nor shackle the spirit of liberation. May we all aspire to leave this same impression of daring to struggle until our last breath. And may Chip's stalwart example give us the courage to dare to win.

A Service is being planned which may be in a month or so due to COVID, followed by a memorial. We want to also thank the many thousands who put their voices together to free Brother Chip.

29 Mar - New Poetry by Marius Mason

We've excited to share new art by Marius Mason. Marius paints a lot and we regret not being able to show it to you. Hopefully sharing this form of art makes up for it (at least in part).

MORE:

Border Babies

She is crying for her mother
The rictus of an existential grief
Pulling her face into contortions
In a tragedy of tears
Tiny toddler arms stretched wide
And shaking...
How can Lindsey Graham
See this child in pain
and feel afraid –
Not FOR her,
But FROM her,
Only
Because
Of
Her beautiful
Brown
Skin

Spring Equinox

I was remembering today
Walking in the Equinox air between the fences
Everywhere
The blinding bright sun shining
Into my old eyes
Looking in the woods beyond the barbed wire
Split so that I felt my life in two places
Once I ushered a biologist to visit
A massive broken oak, another woods
Another time
As her many daughters
Green and graceful
Held the Earth around us
In silence and in hope, we all of us
Some twisty gnarl of law we knew to still the big machines
From bringing down a sufficiently
Ancient tree
The question put and bark and bulk answering back –
No, not 400 years, though surely
Maybe, it could be 250
No way to know for sure, until
Her shattered body reveals her truth with an end
And then,
It is just data and too late
So many stipulations to compassion
When every acorn holds the antidote to human hubris and
destruction
In the possibility of awe –
And then here again,
In this time viewing
These easy thousand trees holding the earth along the hills
So many answers to what ails us
In any place at all it seems
Like air within us and around us
But so rarely on our mind

29 Mar - New Writing and Call to Action by Xinachtli

Chicano political prisoner Xinachtli calls on all freedom fighters, liberation-movement organizations to unite to build the National United Front Prison Lives Matter movement

MORE:

Xinachtli, s/n Alvaro Luna Hernandez, is the longest-held Chicano political prisoner in the United States, targeted by the COINTELPRO-style police state apparatus to stop him from organizing oppressed communities and from becoming a stronger symbol of resistance in the occupied territories of Aztlan, the US Southwest once belonging to Mexico but colonized by forces of US Yankee colonialism and imperialism, after several wars of conquest and annexation in the expansionism of the colonial system by white settler colonists. See "An Indigenous People's History of the United States" by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014 Beacon Press.

Xinachtli was a NGO Human Rights delegate of the International Indian Treaty Council, San Francisco-based at the 49th Session, United Nations Commission on Human Rights at Geneva, Switzerland, March-April 1993, where he delivered a presentation to the UN General Assembly denouncing the historical war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, hypocrisy of the U.S. government and its double standard on human rights, and calling for reparations and for freedom and self-determination for Black, Chicano and other indigenous nations enslaved by US Yankee international colonialism and imperialism.

Xinachtli is supported by the National Jericho Movement, <https://thejerichomovement.com/>; is a member of the Inside Collective for Certain Days Freedom for Political Prisoners yearly calendars, www.certaindays.org; recently making a call for revolutionary unity as appearing in "Re-Build!" a New Afrikan independence movement periodical, www.rebuildcollective.org, Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 2020-21 issue.

Seize the time! Resist fascism! Workers and oppressed prisoners of all colors unite! Patria o muerto! Venceremos! Tierra y libertad!

He has been at the forefront of freedom struggles on behalf of the oppressed prisoner class in the racist, notorious Texas prison system for many years fighting for human rights, for prisoners' rights to receive revolutionary publications, *Hernandez v. Estelle*, 788 F. 2d 1154 95th Cir. 1979, on suppression of "The Torch/La Antorcha" theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Socialist League, NY, now going on 20-plus years in consecutive solitary confinement at the notorious control unit at the James V. Allred Unit in Iowa Park, TX, a racist, inhumane prison sustained by prisoner slave labor. See "We are not slaves" by Robert T. Chase.

Xinachtli welcomes wholeheartedly the ideas and formations put forth in Comrade Kwame Shakur and Jalil Muntaqim's proposal to build the National United Front: Prison Lives Matter movement with revolutionary political education projects inside for the development of cadres and supported by the outside in a proposed Texas Regional Organizing Committee; as well as now accepting a role as a member of PLM National Organizing Committee as designated Field Marshall and foot soldier in the building of our resistance movements outside and inside from New York to Texas to California and worldwide.

Xinachtli would be in charge of necessary work on the outside if released July 18, 2021, his projected release date.

30 Mar - Grand jury refuses to indict parolee Jalil Muntaqim on voter fraud charges

A Monroe County grand jury has declined to indict Jalil Muntaqim who was facing felony charges for registering to vote and could have been sent back to prison.

MORE:

by David Andreatta (*Rochester City News*)

Jalil Muntaqim, was imprisoned under his given name, Anthony Bottom, for nearly 50 years for his role in the murder of two New York City police officers in 1971 before his release in October.

The Monroe County Public Defender's Office confirmed Tuesday that the grand jury last week "no-billed" Muntaqim's case, meaning the jury declined to indict. The case is now sealed.

"I think a no-bill was the right outcome in this case," said his public defender, Jaquelyn Grippe. "Mr. Muntaqim is a truly inspirational person and I can say that it was my privilege to get to know him through this process."

Originally from San Francisco, Muntaqim, 69, settled in Brighton with a friend upon his release.

A day after being set free, however, Muntaqim filled out paperwork given to him by the county Department of Human Services, which helps former prisoners acclimate to civilian life. The packet included a voter registration form, despite Muntaqim not being eligible to vote.

Prosecutors alleged that when Muntaqim filed his voter registration form with the county Board of Elections, he committed two felonies — tampering with public records and offering a false instrument for filing. He was also charged with providing a false affidavit, a misdemeanor.

The Board of Elections subsequently rejected his registration, and the former chair of the county Republican party, William Napier, seized on the matter as a question of voter fraud.

District Attorney Sandra Doorley has said that the charges against Muntaqim were about answering allegations of voter fraud in the weeks before the election and that the case seemed straightforward.

“Is it a major thing?” she asked of the charges. “No.”

If convicted on the charges, Muntaqim's parole status would have required him to return to prison.

Muntaqim enjoyed much public support from family, friends, and Rochester's activist community, who echoed the argument of his public defender that Muntaqim did not realize he was not eligible to vote.

Parolees are not allowed to vote in New York upon release from prison without receiving a conditional pardon from the governor to restore their voting rights.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has issued such pardons as a matter of course on a monthly basis since 2018, when he signed an executive order directing the corrections commissioner to submit to him each month a list of every felon newly eligible for parole, with each name to be “given consideration for a conditional pardon that will restore voting rights.”

Most parolees receive their pardon, which does not expunge their criminal record, within four to six weeks of their release. Cuomo denied Muntaqim a voting pardon in November, however, after news reports of Muntaqim's predicament.

A national movement to restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated people is gaining steam, and Muntaqim's case became a rallying cry for advocates.

"I certainly hope that legislation is passed in the future that expands on Gov. Cuomo's executive order allowing parolees the basic right to vote," Grippe said.

Twenty states allow parolees to vote upon their release, according to the Sentencing Project, an advocacy group for criminal justice reform.

The concept of disenfranchising felons dates to colonial days, when certain criminals were stripped of rights in a practice known as "civil death." Later Americans applied a racist twist to the practice after the Civil War, when many states used it to deprive Black men of the vote they had recently gained.

Today, the impact of these laws still falls disproportionately on poor people of color.

The Supreme Court interprets the Constitution in such a way that upholds these restrictions.

31 Mar - Noise Demo Marks Day of the Young Combatant

Statement from the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement and Outlive Them NYC on Day of the Young Combatant.

MORE:

From the belly of the empire, we, Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement and Outlive Them NYC, send insurgent greetings to our worldwide family, and a raised-fist salute to our sisters, our brothers, and especially to those in captivity.

Yesterday, March 29, abolitionist and anti-fascists in New York City joined in militant commemorations of the International Day of the Young Combatant, in memory of the brothers Rafael and Eduardo Vergara Toledo and of the compañera Paulina Aguirre of Chile, who fell at the hands of Pinochet's secret police on this day in 1985. The nighttime actions were a tribute to martyred freedom fighters everywhere, especially those, like Jonathan Jackson and the Soledad Brothers, who have fallen in the fight for Black and Brown liberation since 1970.

As the brothers Toledo, Paulina Aguirre, Jonathan Jackson, and the Soledad Brothers taught us years ago, it is the Young Combatant who makes history. The youth have the power to abolish the police, to spearhead our revolutionary momentum. We follow the guts and determination of the Black Panthers and [Black Liberation Army] and the insurgent hearts of the youth of the George Floyd Uprising.

This is only the opening salvo in a spring of popular struggle. We will not stop until total liberation.

31 Mar - Drone Whistleblower Charged With Violating Espionage Act Pleads Guilty

Daniel Hale, who revealed information on the targeted assassination program while President Barack Obama was in office, will be sentenced in July.

MORE:

by Kevin Gosztola (*The Dissenter*)

Daniel Hale, who blew the whistle on the United States government's targeted assassination program that includes drones, pled guilty to transmitting and retaining "national defense information" in violation of the Espionage Act.

The guilty plea by Hale makes him the first whistleblower to be convicted under the Espionage Act during President Joe Biden's administration.

A change of plea hearing was held on March 31 in the Eastern District of Virginia, around a week before Hale was scheduled to go to trial.

Judge Liam O'Grady permitted Hale to remain under supervision by a probation officer until sentencing on July 13.

Though Hale pled guilty, prosecutors from the Justice Department opposed canceling the trial altogether and refused to dismiss the four remaining charges. Hale's attorney questioned why this would be allowed.

O'Grady seemed to recognize the four remaining charges criminalize much of the conduct already covered in Hale's plea. Often this is referred to as charge stacking. Yet the judge permitted the government's extraordinary and unusual request, leaving open the possibility of a trial if prosecutors are unhappy with sentencing.

Under President Barack Obama, CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou was targeted in the Eastern District of Virginia with an Espionage Act prosecution. He wound up pleading guilty to violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act in order to ensure he only went to prison for 30 months.

"I'm disappointed that Daniel Hale's case was continued in the Biden Justice Department," Kiriakou shared after learning Hale changed his plea. "I had hopes that Biden's Justice Department appointee would

recognize the public service that Daniel Hale provided when he revealed illegality and abuse in the drone program."

Since Hale is not permitted to offer a public interest defense, Kiriakou added, "That's an injustice."

"So I hope Judge O'Grady recognizes the good in what Daniel Hale has done and gives him the lightest possible sentence."

Hale was part of the Joint Special Operations Task Force in 2012 and identified "targets" for kill and capture. From December 2013 to August 2014, he was a contractor at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

The U.S. government targeted Hale for prosecution after he disclosed documents in 2014 to *Intercept* founding editor Jeremy Scahill for his "Dirty Wars" project, which included a book and a film. The information he revealed also helped *The Intercept* publish the "Drone Papers."

Hale appeared in the 2016 documentary "National Bird." He wore a pin supporting U.S. Army whistleblower Chelsea Manning and followed CIA whistleblower Jeffrey Sterling's prosecution. The FBI raided his home on August 8, 2014, while the film was in production.

He was charged in March 2019 with violating the Espionage Act and other related offenses, and in May, he was arrested.

It is unclear why the Justice Department took several years to charge Hale.

At the change of plea hearing, O'Grady did not believe Hale posed a flight risk, since he was present at the proceedings. But he was particularly concerned with Hale's mental health and urged him to notify his probation officer if he felt like hurting himself.

Hale, who apparently survived a motorcycle accident recently, told the court he was living with supportive people, who for some time allowed him to share space and without paying rent. He is doing chores and cooking meals for his roommates while quarantining during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A list of documents in the superseding indictment against him points to what Hale allegedly exposed.

Prior to the "Drone Papers," a report, "Watch Commander: Barack Obama's Secret Terrorist System, by the Numbers" was published by Scahill and Ryan Devereaux. It exposed how "nearly half of the people on the U.S. government's widely shared database of terrorist suspects are not connected to any known terrorist group."

"More than 40 percent are described by the government as having 'no recognized terrorist group affiliation,'" the journalists reported.

The report brought critical attention to an out-of-control watchlisting system.

In October 2015, "The Drone Papers" were published and revealed criteria for how the White House approved individuals for targeted assassinations and revealed "small footprint counterterrorism operations" that were launched in Somalia and Yemen.

TF 48-4, a special operations task force, was deployed to escalate wars in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. They were commanded from a center at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. They utilized a maritime drone platform and were supposed to hunt down members of al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al Shabaab.

New details about British citizen Bilal el-Berjawi, “who was stripped of his citizenship before being killed in a U.S. drone strike in 2012,” were also made public.

As Kiriakou recalled, he felt an “odd sense of relief” after he pled guilty because the worst part—the unknown—was over.

“The worst part is laying in bed at night and thinking about spending the rest of your life in prison while knowing that you did the right thing,” Kiriakou said. “And so as odd as it might sound, changing a plea to guilty and finally knowing what your sentence is going to be can be oddly liberating.”

Yet Kiriakou knew he would receive 30 months when he pled guilty. Hale does not know how long he will be sentenced to prison, and he will face the additional fear and anxiety of knowing prosecutors may demand a trial for the remaining counts if the court does not approve a harsh enough sentence.

Hale blew the whistle on the powers that the Obama administration arrogated to itself to act as judge, jury, and executioner and transform the world into a battlefield without regard for human rights or international law. He has suffered through a cruel prosecution that was destined to end in a plea agreement because there is no whistleblower defense under the Espionage Act.

Unfortunately, this sends a clear signal that the war on whistleblowers escalated under Obama and continued by Trump remains in full effect.

Hale is likely to receive a four or five-year prison sentence in July that will come with the added risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 if the Bureau of Prisons has not distributed enough vaccines to prisoners.

1 Apr - Prison Break: Glimmers of Light

Below is our condensed version of the monthly column by the Certain Days collective.

MORE:

by Certain Days (*It’s Going Down*)

Spring is here, the sun is shining a bit longer, prison guards are refusing the vaccine, judges are mandating video surveillance to combat guard abuse of prisoners with disabilities, and prison mail companies are expanding their surveillance. It’s a strange and cruel world we’re in the process of dismantling. We continue to see glimmers of light; Virginia—the state with the second most executions—has finally abolished the death penalty.

On March 17, political prisoner and Black Liberation fighter Romaine ‘Chip’ Fitzgerald suffered an episode of massive intracranial bleeding and was airlifted to a nearby hospital. On March 29 we learned that Chip passed away. The longest held member of the Black Panther Party, Chip entered the California prisons at 20 years old, and while he was first eligible for parole in 1976, he remained behind bars for 51 years. Romaine Chip Fitzgerald Presente!

The April artwork in the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar is by Nidal el-Khairi and highlights the roots of solidarity that are needed to combat the prison-industrial complex (PIC). The essay for the month—“Palestinian Prisoners, Steadfastness, and the Grassroots BDS Campaign”—is by Konstantin Kilibarda.

In the coming weeks the Certain Days collective will release its call-out for submissions for the 2022 calendar, including theme and guidelines.

Releases, Acquittals, and Dropped Charges

Standing Rock Water Protector Red Fawn Fallis and hacktivist Jeremy Hammond were released from halfway houses in early March, after serving various sentences for their actions in defense of life. Red Fawn released a statement, while Standing Rock Water Protector Rattler remains in a halfway house, expected to be released sometime in April.

On March 22, charges were dropped against Nick Tilsen and other Land Defenders arrested in the Black Hills on July 3. This is a victory, though the struggle to free the land from corporate greed continues. Journalist Andrea Sahouri, arrested last year while covering a BLM protest, was acquitted of her charges on March 10.

On March 30, a Monroe County Grand Jury declined to indict former political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim, who was facing felony charges for registering to vote upon being released last winter after 49 years of imprisonment.

Ongoing Cases

NoDAPL Water Protector Steve Martinez was held in contempt of court and jailed on March 3 for refusing to testify before a Grand Jury, after being released on February 22 for the same charge. Fundraising is needed, and you can check out a recent Final Straw podcast on the case at tiny.cc/FStraw_SMartinez

On March 17, lawyers for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed a response in the hopes of re-opening appeals filed on Mumia's behalf. You can read more about the struggles of Pennsylvania political prisoners Abu-Jamal and Russell Maroon Shoatz in the new Human Rights Coalition magazine, pages 33-38. On March 19th, Mumia issued a message to supporters who flooded phone lines and email inboxes, demanding his release.

9 Apr - Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) General Assembly

WHAT: General Assembly

WHEN: 6:30pm, Friday, April 9th

WHERE: Online (details below)

COST: FREE

MORE:

We will be hosting another "Virtual" General Assembly—lookout in your various Working Group platforms, e-mail listservs, Loomio, et cetera for details on how to join in and visit macc.nyc

General Assemblies are the most ideal place for new folks to plug-in to MACC, learn about our projects and ongoing efforts, and connect to organizers. We encourage everyone to come with ideas about what they would like to see for future campaigns or actions and what direction they'd like MACC to take to build a more powerful anarchist movement. Especially in our current context, when renewed attention has mixed repression with struggles for racial justice, abolition, and a humane economy. There will be a 6:30-7PM orientation for new folks that would like to get connected and learn more about MACC's structure and history.

Please review these documents before coming: macc.nyc/organizing macc.nyc/safer-spaces