

TIME/CUT

Indiana Prison Newsletter

Issue 14 • Summer 2024

**Wage Embezzlement
& Racial
Discrimination**

**From Palestinian
Liberation to
American Prisons**

**Cooking &
Exercise Tips**

Prisoner Study Circles

Black August

TIME/CUT

is a quarterly publication for Indiana prisoners and their families and friends. It includes news, analysis, and resources from inside and outside the walls and around the world. The articles in the publication do not necessarily reflect on its contributors, creators, readers, distributors, or readers. Its contents are for informational purposes only. TIME/cut does not provide financial or legal assistance or romantic arrangements.

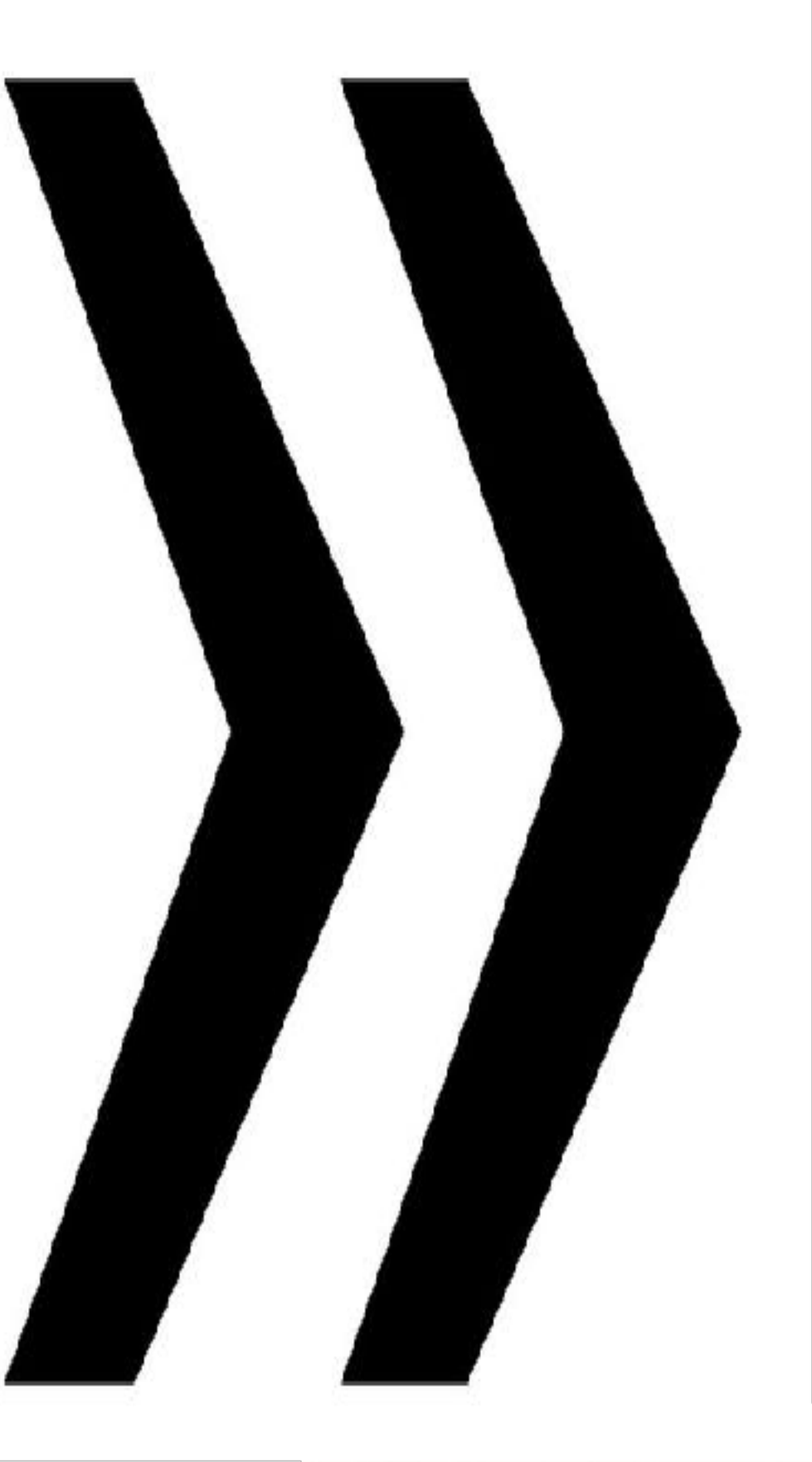
The following are welcome as submissions, contributions, and responses to TIME/cut: reports of conditions inside, book reviews, poetry and artwork, tips for surviving and navigating prison, advice for mental and physical health, educational history, and offerings toward collective organizing and getting free. Please state explicitly if you would like your writings to be considered for publication and if you'd like your name published with it. This publication depends on participation of those incarcerated in Indiana and their loved ones. TIME/cut may choose not to publish some contributions due to limitations of space or the nature of the content. Send submissions to:

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TIME/cut is free to all prisoners in Indiana. If someone passed this newsletter along to you and you're not already on the mailing list, write to us to add your name to the list. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, write us for that too. If family and friends on the outside are interested in receiving and engaging with TIME/cut, send them our address or direct them to Timecut.noblogs.org. Thanks for reading and writing!

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T I M E /cut is being revitalized! With new people on the publication team, RMN is going to be a little different going forward than it has been, new and improved. We are working on making it more intentional, more thorough, and more curated. One of our main goals here is to be more conversational with and among prisoners: more original content and more ongoing discussions and analysis. Each issue will have some prompts, some invitations for engagement. To this end, the questions we're asking you all this time are:

- ✍ *What would you like to see in this publication?*
- ✍ *What is the value of something like this, that we should emphasize?*
- ✍ *What is the power of prisoners speaking to each other across facilities, discussing collective liberation?*
- ✍ *What is something you haven't seen before in the newsletter that you would like to see?*



Blackout Inside New Castle CF Annex

by *Khalfani Malik Khaldun*

from *idocwatch.org*

June 2024

(All power to the people who dont fear freedom)

Comrades;

Just several days ago, while sitting inside my assigned cell in the Annex inside New Castle Correctional Facility. Watching a basketball game. The area I sleep in went completely pitched black. The generators attempted to kick in but had no fail safe. So for the next four or five days we had limited to no power. The hot water went out, and the electricity was off for some time.

When I pulled a staff member to the side, and asked what was happening. I was advised that the system had an overload. That their is no legitimate fail safe in place for system emergencies such as what happen here.

He also said that we are the victims of negligence plain and simple.

There are some good and bad things that can be said about this place. I will not waste yours or my time naming them all. I know that as a political prisoner, my best option as a human being is to get out of prison. This is my advice to all of my fellow comrade who are engaged in this fight for freedom. We have to cut the bullshit out of our daily lives and get to the business of getting free.

As activist, we will never give up exposing these contradictions that oppress the prisoner element behind enemy lines. Our real fight, is on them bloody Amerikan streets.

All Power to the People!!!!!!

Bro. Khalfani Malik Khaldun

The Voice of Indiana's Voiceless.

Salutes to all the comrades of IDOC Watch.



Prison Wage Embezzlement Continues in IDOC

by *IDOC Watch correspondent Landis Reynolds*

from *idocwatch.org*

June2024

As a prisoner, watching your family struggle financially is a tangible pain. A pain that twists the soul and keeps you up at night. This feeling of powerlessness leads to an overwhelming stress that often drive harmful behaviors such as fighting, substance abuse, and drug dealing. For other prisoners without dependents, financial struggles bring a different kind of pain. Hunger pain. The inability to meet basic needs during incarceration can break your spirit. It causes feelings of

worthlessness that also fuel negative behaviors. Not to mention poor financial situations commonly lead recently released prisoners to return to prison.

In March of this year, Cummins-Meritor, a joint-venture company operating at Correctional Industrial Facility (CIF), gave prison laborers a \$1.50 raise bringing their pay to \$2.00 an hour. Kudos to Cummins-Meritor and the administration at CIF for "throwing-a-dog-a-bone." The problem is these men are not dogs, they are people with families. These men do not need the proverbial bone, or in this case a \$1.50 raise. They need a viable means to financially support their families in spite of their absence. They need a means to build a financial nest egg capable of aiding their successful transition back into society. A financial nest egg could provide a safety net as they work to obtain meaningful employment; or potentially form the basis to transition ex-prisoners into small business ownership.

The payment of sweat shop wages is not the alarming part of the story. What is alarming is the fact that as a Joint-Venture, all prisoners employed by Cummins-Meritor are entitled to, at bare minimum, Federal Minimum Wage or prevailing wage in their locality for their respective job. This means as a matter of Federal and Indiana law, prisoners employed by the Brake Shop should be earning between \$15.00-\$17.00 an hour. Instead they are being paid \$2.00 an hour.

The balance is going into IDOC's coffers. Prisoners at Cummins-Meritor work ten-hour days, six days a week in dangerous, filthy conditions without the necessary personal protection equipment. At Federal Minimum Wage that would mean over four thousand dollars a month to assist in the support of their families before taxes. Or four thousand dollars a month towards building a financially secure, law abiding life.

Instead of reinforcing their self-worth and humanity through the validation of their work ethnic and labor, IDOC chooses to validate their status as slaves through embezzlement? How many families lost housing, transportation, etc, because Indiana's penal system identify more as slave masters than rehabilitators.

Here's a parting thought... Earlier this year prisoners in Tacoma, Washington won a \$23 million dollar judgement due to a prison administrations. Then, a month later, CIF administrators in their infinite generosity, decide to give brake shop workers a \$1.50 raise after fifteen years of paying .55 cents an hour. History shows that the only generous slave master is a scared slave master. Sometimes if you throw-a-dog-a-bone it can keep the dog from turning around and biting you in the ass. Sometimes.

A slave is only a slave if they submit. Inaction is acquiescence. Acquiescence is submission.



Silent Tears

by Reo Thompson

July 2024

This piece is written based on conditions, poor treatment, and cries that are going unheard. Its written from real life experiences in real time as of now, Im currently in G-cell house which is the worse lockup unit in the state of Indiana. My words paint a picture of what we're currently enduring, hold on tight for this is the ride of your life.

When I cry, these are silent tears, forbidden to be seen because of silent fears...can you picture somebody who strives to be happy and free, but resides in a silent cell, where others yell and bang for attention because they are trapped inside a walled cell...I MEAN HELL! People cut their wrists and hang themselves from that voice inside their heads that never sleeps as mental health put their head down and creep through here, while Simon says take that inhumane condition before I beat you inside a cell. And if you think about trying to run and tell, Ima place you on strip cell where you are going to eat old, cold rice and bean burritos until you are sick as hell.

Now you can see my silent fears as my face keep dripping from these silent tears, I wonder if the sun will shine, if God can hear. Because this place is really dark, ain't no God in here. But it's a God in me and a God in you if we separate our differences that's what solidarity do. No dividing in me, no dividing you. We can stand against oppression that's what real men do and staying mentally strong that's how dreams come true, but peace, love, and blessings is the divine roots of helping one another to make it through as we strive with perseverance standing tall like a troop. Let's give a moment of silence for the ones who didn't make it through...as I drop another tear for all my brothers and sisters who still locked up in this chicken coop, forgive me for not conforming to a system that is broken, why dehumanize me when the constitution show me Ima person. Why should we keep fighting each other when they are killing us on purpose, you need to learn your purpose, open up your eyes, learn who you are that's how Freedom get inside, standing on your pride its how a lot of people died. We suppose to be the guidance for the youth who still outside, so educate yourself, then step up to the plate cause this the last tear that's about to fall off my face...

A silent fear if you don't know your place...

A silent tear as we be erased...

A silent tear for the amazing grace...



ZINE REVIEW

ZINE REVIEW

Practical Abolition from the Inside Out: reflections on prisoner solidarity organizing by some members of the Barton Prisoner Solidarity Project

“Prison crystallizes all forms of oppression and also props them up, and so organizing around prison can be a way of getting at the core of exploitative power relations in a community.”

Barton Prison Solidarity Project (BAPSOP) is a small abolitionist group in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and this zine describes their project. Their activities are based around maintaining contact with people inside, providing direct support, and monitoring conditions. It is focused on only one local detention facility. The purpose is to combat the isolation of incarceration and “to change the balance of power inside the prison by supporting prisoner self-organizing.” They maintain a phone line, a PO box, social media accounts to share news, participate in mainstream media when strategic, and sometimes have rallies and other events.

When speaking to prisoners, BAPSOP identifies issues and helps develop tactics for collective struggle. They do random favors for prisoners, but not long-term case work or release support. They don't give financial or legal assistance. They are a small collective that is not focused on recruiting inside or outside membership. They are intentionally limited in scope so as to be sustainable and nimble.

This last point is one of the main things that stands out to and appeals to me about this project. So many prisoner support or advocacy orgs try to do too much and burn out or lose sight of their intended purpose. To advocate around every individual act of injustice, degradation, or violence is simply not possible. To focus on collective issues and supporting prisoners in building more power as a class, will in turn benefit these individual issues.

BAPSOP goes on to articulate their philosophy, which starts with political clarity. They are anarchists who are “fully against prison,” not another service or reform organization. And they are clear about that with the people they work with inside. They start with the question of “Where is resistance already happening?” and think about how to grow that. As with many abolitionist projects, they have come up against the tension between reform and full abolition. How do we hold both the demands for better conditions with the goal of destroying prisons? To this, they offer not a simple platitude, but a framework to try out: different roles for people inside and outside. On the inside, their role is winning concrete demands and improvements; the very act of collective action for demands makes a crisis for the administration. On the outside, their role is full abolition. They must do more than simply amplify the prisoners' demands, but also undermine prison power in other ways. What exactly that

Alternatives Leonard Williams

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| <p>Across</p> <p>1. Carnival accessory</p> <p>5. Some tablets</p> <p>10. Brand of non-stick cookware</p> <p>14. Noted fashion magazine</p> <p>15. A “problem” in “The Sound of Music”</p> <p>16. Too</p> <p>17. Disappointment, after a tough loss</p> <p>19. “Africa” band</p> <p>20. Like the powers in the U.S. Constitution</p> <p>21. Eagle’s roost</p> <p>22. You can check out stuff here</p> <p>25. Ammunition that isn’t live</p> <p>27. Virginie, en Vichy</p> <p>28. Chicken ____</p> <p>29. Underground ossuary in Paris</p> <p>34. Stance favoring alternatives to incarceration (a hint for this puzzle’s theme)</p> <p>38. Accosted</p> <p>39. What you hear when a dove cries</p> <p>40. Nickname for the late Justice Scalia</p> <p>41. ____ Ark</p> <p>44. Headquarters of the Metropolitan Police</p> <p>49. It’s a magic number, per “Schoolhouse Rock”</p> <p>50. Dissipates heat like a Volkswagen Beetle</p> <p>54. Strap for a bit</p> <p>55. Conservation officer</p> <p>57. Certain Camaro</p> <p>58. River in the Democratic Republic of the Congo</p> <p>59. ____ area (dangerous or forbidden locale)</p> <p>60. Source of soft wood</p> <p>61. Ivan of tennis fame</p> <p>62. Cause of reduced air quality</p> | <p>Down</p> <p>1. Unimpressive reviews</p> <p>2. Out of the wind, to a sailor</p> <p>3. Will Smith gave one to Chris Rock</p> <p>4. Indian state on the southwest coast</p> <p>5. Announcement in “Terminator 3”</p> <p>6. First section</p> <p>7. With one’s head spinning</p> <p>8. ____ de los muertos</p> <p>9. Tahoma ____ (sign at Steak ‘n Shake)</p> <p>10. Bite-sized bit of fried potato</p> <p>11. Plant life</p> <p>12. Up and about</p> <p>13. One who commands Sarge</p> <p>18. 1982 Disney sci-fi film</p> <p>21. Counting machines</p> <p>23. Spill the beans</p> <p>24. Slanted type: Abbr.</p> <p>25. The Bronx, say, informally</p> <p>26. 64 for Sextus Empiricus</p> <p>28. Pollution measure: Abbr.</p> <p>29. Printer company</p> | <p>30. Blood type letters</p> <p>31. Ind. neighbor</p> <p>32. Reactions to bad calls</p> <p>33. ____-cone</p> <p>35. Portion of a paragraph</p> <p>36. “Swan Lake” role</p> <p>37. Activist and singer Simone</p> <p>41. Tusked whale: Var.</p> <p>42. Black-and-white whale</p> <p>43. Decorates</p> <p>44. Bare it all</p> <p>45. Dearest, in Dijon</p> <p>46. Star hunter?</p> <p>47. Co-star of Williams in “Good Will Hunting”</p> <p>48. Traffic sign</p> <p>51. He won a Tony for playing Burr in “Hamilton”</p> <p>52. Construction bricks</p> <p>53. Make out, in a pub</p> <p>55. Hairstyling product</p> <p>56. Fiver</p> |
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means, I think, remains to be explored by not just BAPSOP but all of us currently on the outside.

They lay out what inside-out organizing typically looks like for them. A few points here stand out to me. First, they talk about how important building relationships is. They try to identify the people who are already talking about collective problems and encourage others to do the same. I like this approach to “leadership,” which can often be fraught, both inside and out. Someone isn’t chosen for leadership position because of status, but temporarily come into it naturally because they are building something collective where they are. Second, BAPSOP helps spread ideas, demands, and actions. People on a certain block or yard together can discuss things together, but it can be hard for things to spread to other units or even other facilities. This is where outside people can fit in. Third, they talk about how tactics for collective action are chosen. They say they are careful not to push anyone towards something specific and are clear that they support a wide variety.

A discussion of inside-out tactics can fall too far in either direction: Outside people trying to direct what’s happening, or choosing to support only tactics that they want to see. On the other hand, outside people can be too afraid to have and share their own understanding and wisdom about tactics. BAPSOP is offering us a framework of outside people who are not just “supporters” but people who have been and/or might well be prisoners in the future. This makes it a shared struggle between inside and the outside in which both sides have something to contribute and respect each others’ judgment and autonomy.

The final section of the zine discusses some of the challenges of their work: staying in touch with and keeping track of people, the operating costs of a phone and a PO box, the limitations of organizing with a small group and in only one detention facility, and the always looming threat of reformism/recuperation.

“Practical Abolition From the Inside Out” is straight-forward writing. It offers a framework and philosophy that provides the foundation and purpose of their project, but it is not overly dense or ideological. I find it refreshing that BAPSOP does not shy away from the challenges, contradictions, and uncertainties in their work. It is not a Program for others to follow, but offers us an honest look at an intelligent and intentional approach to inside-out organizing towards the end of prisons.

“We want change to happen because the administration is forced to reckon with an organized body of prisoners and supporters that is capable of pushing back on their authority.”



Racial Discrimination and Unethical Behavior at Plainfield CF

by IDOC Watch correspondent Aaron Isby-Israel

from idocwatch.org

June 2024

I signed classification papers on 3/28/24, and was hired by Hobbs to do the hospital job at Plainfield Correctional Facility. My job was to do sanitation. When I got there the African nurses and guards begin to subject me to task that was not my job duties. There was a african nurse they calles Mo, she was requiring me and my co-worker to do her job. On several occasions she tried to get me to help her change one of the patients diapers, I told her this was not my job, I was not a certified nurse assistant (CNA), and was not hired to do her job. Nurse Mo became very upset and begin cursing me. This was not the only demeaning and disrespectful thing nurse Mo did, she was handling a patients catheter and she had the audacity to ask me to hold the inmates private part while she working on the catheter, I almost blew a gasket, I told her I was not touching another mans private and this was PREA, this was not my job! This african nurse was violating the law! I was also, required to clean up blood by ofc. Lender, who knew I was not certified for this and he knew this violated policy. The african nurses and guards were extremely domineering, I could not do my sanitation job without them hovering over me and telling me how to mop the floor or clean the toilet? I work over there for two weeks and was removed from the job by the Warden Donald Emerson. I was told that my job was taken due to “facility needs,” but, three white inmates was hired in the hospital after I was removed!



Even When Trans Women Win Transfers to Women’s Prisons, They Still Aren’t Safe

by Victoria Law

from TruthOut.org

July 2024

Many states are rolling back policies allowing trans people to be placed in prisons aligned with their gender identity.

After 17 days, Amber Kim has suspended her one-woman hunger strike protesting her involuntary transfer to a men’s prison.

Since her incarceration in 2006, Kim had spent 15 years in men’s jails and prisons. During that time, she fought both for gender-affirming medical care and for a transfer to a women’s prison. Finally, in 2021, she was transferred to the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW).

Three years later, this past March, Kim was issued a 504 disciplinary ticket for allegedly engaging in consensual sex with her girlfriend, a cisgender woman. (Sex, even consensual

sex, is against prison rules.)

Prison officials moved both women to a closed custody unit, also known as punitive segregation. As the Huffington Post reported, Kim's disciplinary report was leaked, seemingly by prison staff, to the National Review, which published an inflammatory story about the ticket and alleged that trans women sexually exploit cisgender women in women's prisons.

The ticket also triggered a review of Kim's placement in a women's prison. Department of Corrections Communications Director Chris Wright told the Huffington Post that the "housing review was initiated because of Kim's most recent sexual contact with another incarcerated individual."

In June, three months after she was issued the disciplinary ticket, officers brought Kim out of her cell and told her she was being transferred to a men's prison. She asked to see the transfer paperwork. She also asked to speak with her lawyer. When both requests were denied, she refused to walk. In response, she told Truthout that guards threw her to the ground, hog tied her, and drove her the 70 miles to the Monroe Correctional Complex, where she was placed in the Intensive Management Unit, or solitary confinement. She was issued two tickets for allegedly refusing to follow staff orders and refusing a facility transfer.

In response, Kim went on hunger strike. She initially contacted Truthout nine days into her strike. While LGBTQ+ people across the nation were commemorating Pride with parades, protests and parties, Kim spent her single hour outside her cell in a concrete yard calling the media and trying her best to ignore hunger pangs.

Despite her repeated requests, no one has told her what steps she must take to return to WCCW. She submitted an appeal, but despite prison policy requiring a response within 15 business days, has heard nothing. "I'm writing another letter to [the head of the Department of Corrections in] Olympia today," she told Truthout in mid-July.

At Monroe, Kim has two choices: stay in extreme isolation or face continual physical and sexual violence in general population. During her 15 years in men's prisons, she experienced continual physical and sexual violence—including being called derogatory names in three languages every time she left her cell, being beaten up, and facing men attempting to shove their way into her cell after she rejected their advances.

"I am terrified of being put in a men's general population," she told Truthout. "If they put me in a cell with a random dude, there's a pretty good chance he's going to victimize me. And if I'm in a pod full of men, I guarantee you some of them will victimize me."

Kim's fears are neither irrational nor exceptional. Trans people behind bars are over five times more likely to be sexually

assaulted by staff and over nine times more likely to be assaulted by other incarcerated people, according to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. The survey also found that nearly one of every four respondents reported physical assault by staff or other incarcerated people while one in five reported being sexually assaulted.

In recent years, several states have implemented policies allowing trans people — particularly trans women — to be placed in prisons according to their gender identity. That's why Kim was able to transfer to WCCW, and finally feel safe from the constant threat of physical and sexual violence. Now, Washington seems to be following a troubling trend in which states that have recently adopted gender-affirming prison housing policies for trans women are rolling them back, particularly after barrages of transphobic media reports.

"Be Perfect or We Will Not Let You Be Safe"

According to the Washington Department of Corrections, approximately 250 people in its 11 prisons (or 1.1 percent of the prison population) identify as transgender or nonbinary. Nearly half (or 122 individuals) identify as trans women.

Currently, 12 trans women are housed at WCCW.

Since January 2021, WCCW staff have issued 33 disciplinary tickets for 504 infractions (or infractions for having sex), according to an email from the Washington Department of Corrections. Of those, only Kim's has resulted in a transfer. A prison spokesperson told Truthout that officials will conduct reviews every six months and that Kim's placement may be considered then.

"I feel like [my transfer] sends a message of terror — you damn well better be perfect or we will not let you be safe," Kim reflected.

That's what A.D. Sean Lewis, an attorney with the Prison Law Office's Trans Beyond Bars program, has seen as well.

Transferring trans women to men's prisons or changing housing policies in response to allegations of sexual activity divides them into categories: those who are seen as safe and deserving to be housed in a women's prison, and those who no longer deserve safety considerations, he told Truthout.

That divide also "creates the implication that trans people present unique safety concerns that non-trans people don't," he added, despite several studies showing that incarcerated trans people are far more likely to experience rather than perpetrate violence against their cisgender peers.

"I Wish I Was Confident in the Broken System"

In 2021, the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC) settled a lawsuit filed by the ACLU over its treatment of trans people in custody. Under its June 2021 settlement agreement,

the DOC agreed to maintain a policy for at least a year giving trans people the “presumption” to be housed according to their gender identity.

In 2023, after a trans woman impregnated two women at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, New Jersey’s sole women’s prison, the state reversed its gender-affirming housing policy. The current policy requires incarcerated trans women to undergo vaginoplasty, a gender-affirming surgery which removes the penis, testicles and scrotum and creates a vaginal canal and vulva, to eliminate any “reproductive concerns.”

The new policy meant that, although no one had accused 61-year-old Gia Valentina of any sexual activity, she was nonetheless transferred to the men’s New Jersey State Prison. She had been at Edna Mahan for only 59 days after a years-long fight. But on May 4, 2023, she was moved.

At the men’s prison, Valentina has spent the past 14 months in segregation despite the state law restricting solitary confinement to no more than 20 consecutive days. The law also limits the practice for vulnerable people, including pregnant or disabled people, those under 21 or over 65 years old and LGBTQ+ people. Although it has specific guidelines for the other vulnerable populations, the law provides none for LGBTQ+ people.

Valentina had been requesting vaginoplasty since February 2022 and is hoping that this will address prison administrators’ new-found “reproductive concerns.” But behind bars, Valentina cannot schedule her own medical appointments and must rely on the prison’s medical staff to do so — and on the administration to authorize these appointments. Meanwhile, in segregation and uncertain about her surgery, her days blur together.

“When you asked me what my typical day looked like, they [really] don’t differ from day to day when it comes to dealing with my mental anguish of not getting my vaginoplasty surgery (having this ‘thing’ still on my body) and being in this men’s prison,” she wrote in an e-message to Truthout. “The moment I wake up I am faced with having this penis! It’s a brutal reminder of how I am being held captive in this body that is not mine. Then I have to face all the discrimination, transphobia, misgendering, all the weirdos, perverts, creeps. This is the worst I have ever had it and the highest level of trans discrimination I have ever faced.”

In mid-June, Valentina had a ray of hope. Jamie Belladonna, another trans woman at New Jersey State Prison, had obtained authorization for vaginoplasty and was taken to an outside hospital for the surgery. “This is a very historical moment for the Pride community inside these walls of the prison industry and personally for me to see my sister get the medical treatment she needs,” Valentina wrote on the day that her friend left.

“I am supposed to be next for surgery,” she continued. “I wish I

was confident in the broken system, but I am not. We shall see how things unfold.”

Belladonna had previously been told that she would not be allowed to transfer to the women’s prison until she obtained the surgery. She had assumed that she would be transferred to Edna Mahan once the hospital discharged her.

Instead, she was returned to New Jersey State Prison. There, prison officials told her that she needed to fill out an official transfer request. She also learned that the prison psychologist had flagged her as moderate to high risk of committing sexual violence. When she met with him in early July, she learned that his assessment had been based purely on her pre-surgical genitalia. Since she had had vaginoplasty, he told her he was removing his risk assessment that she would likely commit sexual violence.

Now, however, prison officials have deemed her as being at risk for being a victim of sexual violence and have moved her to a protective custody unit. Her friend Gisella Mann told Truthout that unit is even more isolated than the segregation unit she had been in with Valentina. In protective custody, Belladonna stays in her cell nearly all day. She has no access to recreation, in contravention of the state’s Isolated Confinement Restriction Act. She also has no access to electronic messaging, although she can still use her tablet to call pre-approved phone numbers, like Mann’s. (Truthout was unable to get on her approved phone list before her surgery and subsequent isolation.)

Belladonna has since filled out the paperwork requesting a transfer to Edna Mahan. Staff have told her that she may be waiting up to 30 days for a decision.

“This is psychological torture,” she recently told Mann.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections did not respond to Truthout’s questions before publication.

“They Fear Continuing to Speak Up”

In California, Senate Bill 132, or The Transgender Respect, Agency and Dignity Act, went into effect on January 1, 2021. The Act allows trans, nonbinary and intersex people to request to be housed and searched in a manner consistent with their gender identity. Since then, 334 trans women have requested to be placed in women’s prisons; 46 have been approved.

Unsurprisingly, the transfers of trans women to women’s prisons spurred a flurry of transphobic media stories, which lobbed unfounded accusations of trans women sexually assaulting and impregnating cisgender women. (A review by the state’s Office of the Inspector General found no substantiated, or proven, instances of sexual assault or impregnation by trans women.)

The firestorm of attention on the few dozen women transferred to Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) obscures the

Cooking in Lock-Up

Creamy Chicken Alfredo

Recipe from "Not Your Average Noodle" cookbook for prisoners

Some notes:

- "Season packet" is the flavor pack that comes with a Ramen Soup.
- "Butter packets" and "jelly packets" refer to those single serving packets you get at fast food restaurants.
- "Spoon" refers to white plastic flatware like what you get at fast food restaurants. Since we don't have normal measuring utensils we consider a tablespoon to be an extra full spoon and a teaspoon is when you give it a shake.
- "Large bowl" is a Tupperware style container (6.8 cups/1.62 L)
- "Stinger" is a machine we can buy in magazines that profit by exclusively selling to prisoners. We place one end of a stinger in a tub with water in it and it boils. A layer of plastic from a garbage bag allows us to cook food on a surface reaching over 200 degrees. When we cover the tub with a towel or rug, it holds more in our stove/oven.
- "Tub" is an 11.4 qt plastic wash tub. We usually keep the water level about 2-3 inches. We use baking soda, denture cleaning tablets, laundry powder or salt to add conductivity to the water. We may use a combination of all of the above, but we try not to put a lot of salt as it will rust the Stinger faster.
- "Kitchen" refers to ingredients not on the commissary which we have to get from someone who works in the prison kitchen. We can get some of these items, like fresh vegetables from folks who receive special diets (Kosher, MTI, etc).

INGREDIENTS:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 2 chicken season packets | Sauce: |
| 1 tsp black pepper | 8oz of cream cheese or 1 cup cottage cheese, mashed smooth |
| 2 cups broccoli, chopped | 1 provolone cheese bar, shredded |
| 1 tbsp water | 10 butter packs |
| 4 uncrushed soups (chicken) | 1 tbsp garlic powder |
| 2 tbsp Parmesan cheese | 1 tbsp onion powder |
| ½ cup mozzarella cheese (optional) | 1 tbsp Italian seasoning, or oregano |



INSTRUCTIONS:

Mix all in a rice bag and cook for 1 hour, stirring periodically.
Add milk if you want it less rich/thick



In a chip bag, combine the Alfredo ingredients and cook for 1 hour.

Place broccoli and water in small bowl. Steam for 3-5 minutes, maximum.

In 2 large bowls cook two soups each (uncrushed) with 1 season packet for each soup. Drain. Add chicken, Alfredo sauce, then broccoli. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese then mozzarella.

Let stand in bowl in Stinger for 5 minutes.

more prevalent violence, said A.D. Lewis.

He noted that hundreds of trans women remain in men's prisons. According to the state's data, 70 trans women were denied transfer and 93 changed their minds during their classification hearings. Another 125 are still awaiting a decision.

In male prisons, trans women face extremely high rates of violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault and trafficking. But the media furor has focused not on the heinous and extreme violence facing trans women in men's prisons, but instead on the actions of dozens at women's prisons.

In an email to Truthout, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation stated that, since SB132's passage, 13 transgender women were transferred to women's prisons and later transferred back to men's prisons. Eleven of those return transfers were voluntary. The agency also pointed out that both federal and state law prohibit housing decisions based solely on a person's genitalia.

Jen Orthwein represents two trans women who were transferred to the Central California Women's Facility. Both were subjects of sustained media attention after their transfers to CCWF and ultimately transferred back to men's prisons.

"Despite exercising multiple forms of advocacy, including letters to stakeholders and litigation, we have been powerless to prevent our clients from being subjected to prolonged isolation and irreparable harm while in facilities for women," Orthwein told Truthout.

"In response to being public advocates for themselves and other incarcerated transgender people, our clients were each subjected to years in isolation," they continued. "Ultimately, they were returned to men's facilities almost immediately after their stories of tortuous treatment in the women's facility were published. They fear continuing to speak up and face more retaliation. They have conveyed they just want to be able to program to reduce their time and get out, which they have not been allowed to do for years now." (Truthout is not publishing Orthwein's clients' names to prevent further retaliation.)

Lewis has seen a similar pattern. "The people who advocate for themselves and for the trans community at large are often targeted and face extreme discrimination and retaliation," he told Truthout. That harassment and retaliation convey the message that advocacy, including filing grievances about prison wrongdoings, will lead to repercussions.

Furthermore, he notes that sensationalistic media about trans women in women's prisons reverberate far past the individuals and prisons.

"These types of stories are widely shared among corrections officials," he explained. Lewis, who visits jails and prisons

throughout California, has been asked on multiple occasions about the alleged impregnations in New Jersey and how officials can prevent similar scenarios.

Lewis notes that staff have been giving the media confidential information about trans people. "There are people in prisons and jails who are actively breaking rules, sharing confidential information and leaking information to right-wing press. Then, when these stories are reported, these stories have a huge reach nationally."

That's what happened to Kim while she was at the women's prison in Washington. Under prison policy, incarcerated people's gender identities are confidential medical information. Nonetheless, someone at the DOC leaked Kim's disciplinary report. In late March, a prison spokesperson told HuffPost that the agency was "concerned that someone disclosed private medical information" about Kim and was investigating the leak. In mid-July, the same spokesperson told Truthout that the investigation was ongoing.

Twelve days into her hunger strike, Kim was moved from segregation into the prison's medical unit to be monitored by health care staff. There, she remains on segregation status. Because she has been on hunger strike, nurses check her blood pressure and vitals. When they do so, she is either handcuffed behind her back or placed in waist restraints.

On July 8, 17 days into her hunger strike, a prison doctor informed her that one of her gender-affirming surgeries, which had been scheduled while she had been at WCCW, would be canceled if she did not begin eating.

Kim suspended her hunger strike. "The state is trying to force me to choose between safe housing or a gender-affirming surgery that will allow me to live my life more fully," she said in a statement to advocates and supporters.

"The most important thing to consider is that I'm not an outlier. I've just been able to gain attention for what is normal," Kim told Truthout three days after suspending her hunger strike. "The use of state-sanctioned violence to force people into unsafe situations is normal for the DOC. The disregarding of a person's understanding of their safety is normal for the DOC. Discrimination against LGBTQ people is normal for the DOC. I'm not special. I just happened to have had some luck in bringing attention to the issue."



Drawing Connections from the Palestinian Liberation Struggle to Amerikkkan Prisons

by Monsour Owolabi, Ferguson Unit
from ItsGoingDown.org

January 2024

When thinking about the connections between Amerikkkan prisons and the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people at the hands of Israel, there's a list of parallels that come to mind.

Both the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the human rights violations that fuel prison resistance and abolitionist praxis are fueled by gigantic industrial complexes [the military industrial complex and the prison industrial complex]. These complexes and their profitability prevent human decency and human interests equality and justice from taking precedence over corporate and capitalist-imperialist interests.

The role of the police and military, i.e. prison guard or "security force" as an occupying army. A mad-dog, militarized force utilized to be sicced on oppressed people, confined people, unbroken people, exploited people, and anyone on the wrong side of imperialist hegemony.

The usage of these agents of repression to instill terror in the people is the same in both instances.

In both instances, the enemy has demonized struggle, and de-regulated and criminalized self-defense. Israel screams, "Defend Israel's right to exist," and many run with that notion, never understanding that under international treaties and standards a nation does NOT have the right to defend itself against the attacks by a nation or people is is currently occupying or colonizing. In Amerikkkan prisons, and on Amerikkkan streets, a person can not defend themselves from police attack, and in events where state agents attack the people, official law protects those agents with "qualified immunity."

In a Texas town, police attempted to kill a man after his legal advocacy not only helped get one man off death row but exposed deliberate corruption in the local police force. When an officer of that same police force went to kill this man, he happened to wrestle the weapon from the officer and shot his would-be assassin. The man who defended his life was arrested and sentenced to fifty years in Texas prison. That man has spent the last two decades in a US torture chamber. He is political prisoner Alvaro Luna Hernandez, aka Xinachtli, a person denied the right to defend his right to life, similar to the denial of the Palestinian resistance as a legitimate liberation movement defending millions of lives.

In Florida, Othal Wallace is fighting the empire's "legal" killing machine (death row) after courageously defending himself when an officer attempted to shoot him. After a quick tussle Othal "Ozone" Wallace killed the officer in self-defense. His defense of his life is considered illegitimate, much like those countless Palestinians who've lost life, liberty, limb, and safety at the hands of settler-colonialism prior to October 7th. To those people who support Israel, those people do not matter. The Palestinian people are now fighting death row at the hands of Israel's "legal" killing machines.

Those captive in US prisons and the Palestinian people are state-less human beings with no instrument of governance in existence that maintains, protects, or provides basic rights. Neither can vote for people who make decisions each day that dictate their lives. Both are second class citizens at best. Both experience a separate and unequal existence in comparison to the rest of the Amerikkkan/Israeli populace.

In both experiences the power structure maintains a monopoly on the propaganda and thus warps the public opinion in its own favor.

Gaza has often been called an open-air prison. Palestinians there understand the meaning of a confined existence. They understand being born a suspect. They know what it means to be designated a "security threat group" or "terrorist." They understand the reality of living under constant surveillance. They know how it feels to be abducted from your community, held captive, and ripped apart from your family. They also know the "fire inside" that rages and plots victory over one's enemies.

If observing the Palestinian struggles against Israeli domination doesn't inspire you as a revolutionary, you may be another species other than human. I listened to a woman learn of her husband's death, and begin to exclaim and shout as if a miracle had happened. She was proud. She was joyful. Her understanding of the liberation struggle of her people made her proud that her husband died for such a worthy cause. She could not bring herself to selfish self-pity. Instead, in the midst of enemy onslaught, she compelled her neighbors, her friends to join her to break bread, sharing what would have been her husband's portion. What a person! What a fighter!

When taking mental notes of the Palestinian liberation war I am being reminded of our need over here to intensify the struggle, intensify the contradictions. I am reminded there is no commonality between the imperialists and the people, between the enemy state, between the empire and its revolutionary subjects.

International solidarity must not cease or slacken, even in prisons, because a ceasefire is not even the tip of the iceberg in bringing a solution to this conflict.

May the fighting spirit of the Palestinian people become the fighting spirit of freedom fighters everywhere.

#LongLivethePalestinianPeople
#FreePalestine
Monsour Owolabi
Ferguson Unit
Texas "Department Of Correctional Justice"



Diaries of Blood: The secret artists within Israeli detention facilities.

by Eman Al-Astal

from ScalawagMagazine.org

June 2023

When I asked my uncle Khader Shaat, 47, about the poetry verse that he inscribed on the embroidered, handmade notebook about 30 years ago in Asqalan Israeli prison, he told me that it was the fuel that made him survive.

“Clinging to a life of freedom kept me alive,” he said, remembering the notebook he made out of black fabric and framed using many beads.

Khader Shaat was detained when he was 17, sent to prison as a child, and released as a very strong young man.

From 1948 until today, Israel has detained and attacked many iconic, educated thinkers and revolutionaries as a way to suppress their voices, lessen awareness, and hide the truth. But the Occupation doesn't discriminate. According to the 2023 report of the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, there are currently 4,850 detainees in Israeli prisons, among them 31 women, including eight mothers and 160 children.

Israel detains these children for nothing more than being Palestinian. You may be walking in the street, performing your prayer at a mosque or a church, doing your job at a company, studying for your exam to a school, or whatever and whenever. The accusation is homelove. They want the young Palestinians to grow up with fear, to stop raising their voices, to never defend their land.



Khader spent four years in Israeli detention facilities, and a part of him still exists in prison. He relives his experiences there through his memories, stories, and art.

“I still remember that some inscribed their emotions on letters or prison walls by their blood [spilled during] interrogation. It is known that the prison walls are a huge picture of emotional documentation. We used to know previous detainees through their writings.”

Pictures drawn in blood link decades of legacies of people who

have been imprisoned and tortured by Israeli guards. A hidden archive of poems, letters, drawings, and handmade objects—containing stories of resistance, messages of despair, and hope—amass behind prison walls. Throughout each resounds a pulsing call for freedom.

I asked my uncle about the first piece of art he produced. “It's not easy to handle where to start, but what I can tell is that Palestinian detainees inscribe their emotions and resist through crafts,” he said.

Sometimes prisoners draw on handkerchiefs, or embroider different symbols of life and hope: broken chains, olive branches, white pigeons, Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Dome of the Rock.

Khader showed me what he painted in 1995 in the Asqalan prison as a gift to my mother because he couldn't celebrate her graduation with her. In the piece, a white pigeon holds a letter as it flies to Rafah—my uncle's city. The letter frame is colored blue and red.

“I always used blue in my art,” Khader explained. “It reminds me of the blue, wide sky—the sky I couldn't feel for years in prison.”

Behind the pigeon wings, Khader painted the Dome of the Rock. For him, the image is a symbol of freedom, as this pigeon can fly to see the Palestinian places that he cannot. A candle's bright light represents waiting for hope after darkness, and all the years he passed alone full of longing. Surrounding the scene, written in a red evocative of the blood others used to write on prison walls, is a message: “O, Bird of Happiness, tell my loved ones that their memories and love are in my heart.”



Homesickness is a common theme. In addition to paintings, people being detained also make necklaces from silk and flint stones shaped like the map of Palestine. They plait silk strings and engrave the stone for a month or two to send it as a gift to their families outside.

Stones are tough to engrave, especially by the small pieces of metal the prisoners gather from the barbed wire surrounding the prison. It takes time, effort, blood, pain, and injuries to come out with a heart-shaped stone or an inscribed word.



National Organizing Platform

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned persons
2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under U.S. jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor
3. The Prison Litigation Reform Act must be rescinded, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights
4. The Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act must be rescinded so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole
5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in southern states
6. An immediate end to racist gang enforcement laws targeting Black and brown humans
7. No imprisoned human shall be denied access to rehabilitation programs at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender
8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services
9. We demand the immediate release of all political prisoners
10. The voting rights of all confirmed citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees, and so called "ex felons" must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count

REVISED FEBRUARY 2021

2024 Abolition SHUT 'EM DOWN Demonstrations

WEEK OF SOLIDARITY
Decemeber 6 - December 13

INSIDE: HALT ALL LABOR & STOP ALL COMMISSARY SPENDING
OUTSIDE: ORGANIZE DEMOS OUTSIDE OF JAILS, PRISONS, & ICE

Media Contact: Media@IncarceratedWorkers.org

Endorse & Organize: JailhouseLawyersSpeak.com/ShutEmDown



STUDY. FAST. FIGHT. TRAIN.

An intro into Black August



Presented by
People's Programs

WHAT IS BLACK AUGUST?

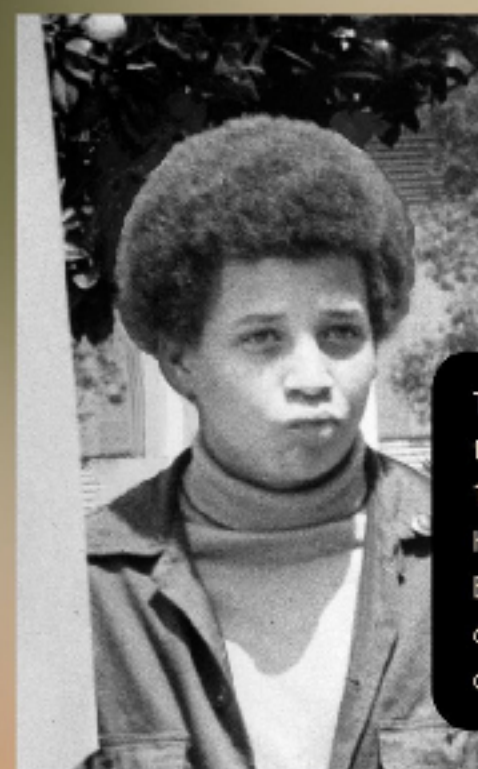
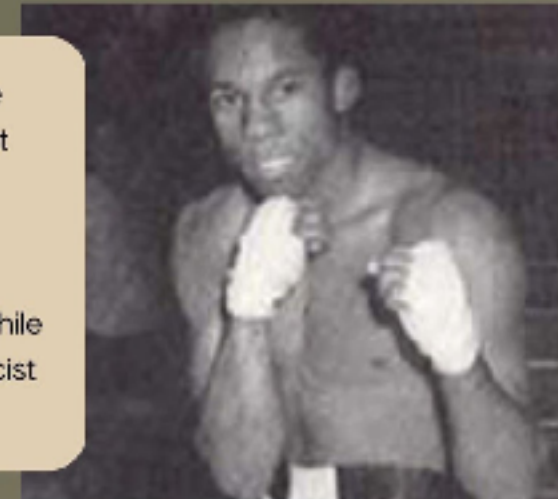
Officially beginning in 1979, Black August's roots are in the California Penal System. Conscious New Afrikan captives understood the historical importance of the month of August to New Afrikan struggle. i.e. Nat Turner's Rebellion, The Niagra movement, Marcus Garvey's birthday, the deaths of Freedom Fighters such as Jonathan and George Jackson, and organized a month of actions to honor this history.



Black August is not about haphazard celebrations and empty acknowledgement. It's about placing the resistance to imperialism and colonial subjugation at the forefront of our thoughts and actions!

W.L. NOLEN, 1970

From Oakland, grew up a boxer, inside prison organized other inmates against racist guards and inmates. Founding member of the BGF. Assassinated in January of 1970 by a prison guard towering over him. Shot in the head while defending himself from a [planned] racist attack on the yard in Soledad prison.



JONATHAN JACKSON, 1970

The younger brother of George Jackson. Killed in battle while trying to liberate captives in the Marin County courthouse in 1970. Only 17 years old Jonathan aimed to negotiate the hostages in exchange for the freedom of the Soledad Brothers, who were being railroaded for the alleged murder of a prison guard in Soledad prison. Jonathan exposed the contradictions and took the struggle to new heights!

“Who taught you?” I asked.

“Old detainees teach the young. Some inscribe, some sculpt, some write or paint or draw or spin. One piece of art can be made by as many as 20 prisoners.”

Creativity becomes a way for those who are being detained to communicate to loved ones. Frustrated by the inability to touch or hug family and friends, those inside Israeli prisons turn to crafts to express love and devotion.

Palestinian crafters spend months collecting tins of toothpaste in order to smooth them and produce a photo frame. Mothers send this frame to their children to capture a family photo—without them. Husbands send it to their wives.

“I was always distinguished by my calligraphy. I wrote many letters to my cellmates for their families.”

When someone gets news about their family members, whether bad or good—death, birth, graduation, and marriage included—they translate their feelings into diaries, poems, and narrative.

“Many illiterate detainees would sit next to me to dictate what to write. I sit. He sits. I grab white paper. He breathes. I wait. He dictates: ‘To my dear Mom.’ I write it down. He chokes. I wait. He bursts into tears. I leave the paper, hug him, and console him,” Khader recalled.

“The worst and hardest moment a detainee faces is when Israeli officers interrogate him, [enduring] days of severe psychological and physical torture and humiliation,” he added. “After this, no one remains the same. We all become different people.”

Palestinian prison literature is an independent and rich genre that reveals some of the untold violent experiences that people are subject to while detained. The novel *Curtains of Darkness* was written by Walid Hodali, who was sentenced to 15 years. In it, he documented the severe torture methods that the prisoners faced at the hands of interrogators, who tried to withdraw confessions. He depicts the details of the continuous *shabeh*, in which the prisoner is tied to a chair for hours, his hands and feet tied to his back.

“Do you know Bassam Al-Sayeh, the Palestinian prisoner who passed away in 2019 due to medical negligence in Israeli prisons?” my uncle asked pointedly.

I stared intently. “Yes, he had cancer”

“He has another detained brother, Amjad Al-Sayeh. When prison authorities issued Bassam to receive medicine at [Assaf Harofeh] Clinic, they refused to allow Amjad to accompany and support him. Lonely, Bassam died spending his last breaths alone.”

Amjad translated his tears into a narrative book called *A Goodbye Smile*, titled after the last smile and hug between the two brothers. The book details the cruelty leveraged against Bassam’s family, how Israeli guards said Bassam’s body would not be released to the family until his corpse served the remainder of his three life sentences in prison.

Thinking of the book and Bassam’s death called up painful memories for my uncle. One night when he was sleeping in his cell, he all of a sudden jumped out of his rusty bed. Suffocating and sweaty, he gasped in the dark and tried to let the nightmare pass. It was about dying alone in prison, never to meet his family again, never to feed his beloved cat Runa again, never to hug his mother again, never to plant a tree with his father in the small yard again. He was afraid of dying incomplete.

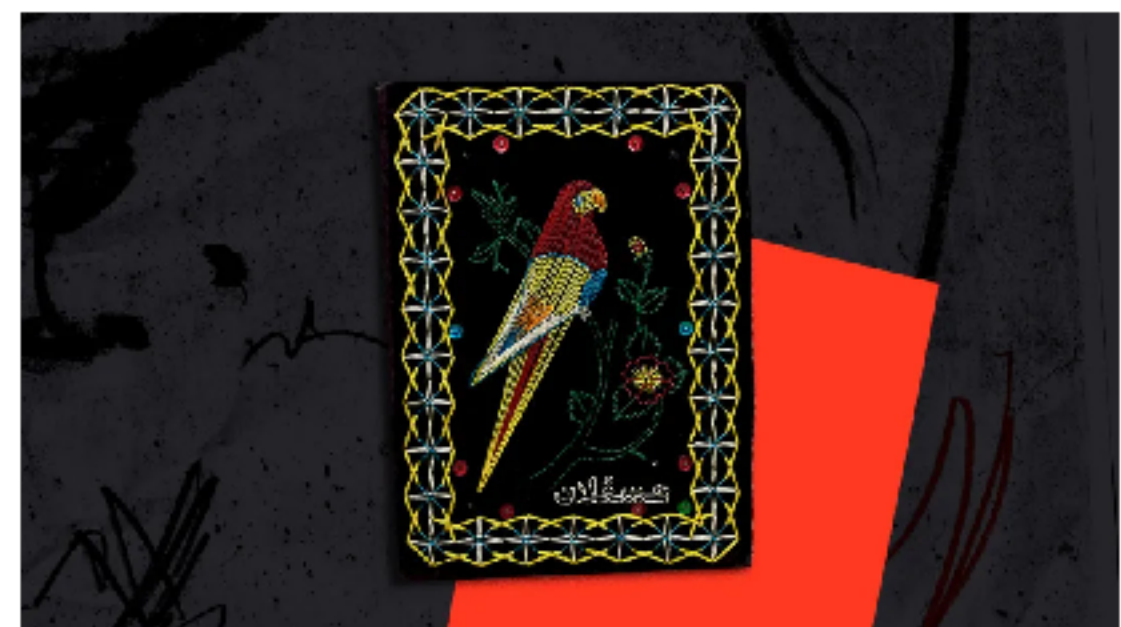
He was afraid of leaving without a last goodbye. It was only a passing nightmare for my uncle. But for Bassam, it was reality.

Detained Palestinians don’t just suffer the loss of their years or their family members, but they also mourn the loss of the only hope to have a legacy outside the prison. They live in fear of losing their art.

“I had a rich notebook where I poured my years of fruitful knowledge and experience,” Khader sadly told me. “Israel confiscated it.”

Every three or four months, Israeli occupation forces invade the cells to confiscate or damage what Palestinian detainees create. Thus, many cannot save their work unless they succeed in passing it to their lawyers and family when visiting, or to a soon-released detainee.

“When I left Be’er Sheva prison and gained my freedom in 1997, I only had letters. At that time, it was a bloody, brutal period, and Israeli prison authorities banned crafts,” Khader told me.



Creating art in prison is limited as the Israeli forces hardly allow for the Red Cross (ICRC) or families to provide materials that Palestinian detainees ask for. Detainees care about cultural, educational, and literary issues as much as their health and food.

In many cases, imprisoned Palestinians go on collective strikes in order to fight for such needs. These strikes are another story of suffering.

In April 2017, 1,500 detainees went on strike to better their lives and demand medicine and family visits. Among their demands were allowing for newspapers and books, as well as the ability to learn at Open Hebrew University in prisons.

After 41 days, they finally suspended their strike, celebrating this achievement. But in other cases, they wait for long months and then receive nothing.

With all this potential to create, if those detained were free, what creative inventions would they contribute to humanity? How many stories would be released?

“I think I produced more than 100 pieces [while detained]” Uncle Khader said with pride.

Amazed and excited, I asked Khader to show me more handmade art. Suddenly, the conversation changed. His voice faded, his smile disappeared, and his eyes shrunk a little. The wrinkles of age and sorrow were clearly painted on his face.

“Israeli bulldozers entirely demolished our old home in 2004. You were only three years and don’t remember. There, under the rubble, I lost all my photos, memories, and handicrafts — the ones I made and the ones my detained friends gifted me after release.”

Israel chases Palestinian crafts inside and outside prison. They fear our art. They fear our memories.



How Prison Officials Manufactured Gangs

by Kevin “Rashid” Johnson

from *PrisonRadio.org*

March 2024

With the prevalence of youth lumpen organizations (so called street gangs) in Virginia today, it’s hard to believe that there were actually no gangs (especially no Black ones) in Virginia’s prisons prior to 2004. The culture never took root because of Virginia’s own culture of prisoners bonding based upon the cities they were from prevented it. The few gang members who did surface were mocked as bringing alien cultures into Virginia’s own local culture. Virginia had always had a highly territorial culture against those from other states.

I witnessed the birth and clash of gangs in Virginia prisons and how officials at Virginia’s remote Red Onion State Prison (ROSP) and Wallens Ridge (WRSP) manufactured

the entire situation almost overnight beginning in 2005.

This all happened for a reason.

Inventing Justifications For Two Unneeded Supermaxes:
The gangs were created and played against each other by these officials because they needed to create justifications for ROSP and WRSP to remain open in light of both being repeatedly exposed as unneeded, and previous justifications proving to be lies. Particularly where the expensive construction and operation of these prisons contributed to a state recession.

When ROSP and WRSP opened in 1998 and 1999 respectively, the Virginia Department of Corrections (sic!) [VDOC] director Ron Angelone fed the public the lie that these two 1,200 bed supermaximum security prisons were needed to safely house Virginia’s huge number of chronically violent and dangerous prisoners and those never going home.

In response to a flood of prisoner complaints about racism and abuse at ROSP, Human Rights Watch (HRW) investigated conditions at the prison and in 1999 issued a scathing report. (1) The report not only exposed extreme racism and abuse in the prison, but also that Angelone’s claimed justifications for these prisons were outright lies. HRW found that the vast majority of prisoners assigned to these facilities were soon to be released back to society while very few met the VDOC’s own criteria for supermax housing, and the VDOC never had enough chronically disruptive prisoners to fill even a fraction of one let alone the two 1,200 bed supermax facilities. Officials then repeatedly rewrote VDOC classification policies attempting to make more prisoners qualify for housing at ROSP and WRSP, yet failed miserably.

They ended up having to transfer most ROSP and WRSP prisoners to lower level facilities. Then began an unprecedented move of contracting to hold waves of prisoners from other states and territories.

Large groups of prisoners were suddenly brought to ROSP and WRSP from Washington D.C., Connecticut, New Mexico, The Virgin Islands, Wyoming, and many other states in efforts to fill beds that the Virginia prisoners couldn’t. This scheme quickly backfired as these out-of-state prisoners experienced the same racist abuse as had Virginia prisoners at the hands of ROSP and WRSP staff, and reported these mistreatments to loved ones, the media, and organizations in their home states, where they had strong advocacy networks and groups unlike Virginia

prisoners.

Prisoners from Connecticut were being murdered by WRSP officials like Laurence Frazier, a Black man who died from repeatedly being electrocuted by multiple guards while he was strapped down to a steel bedframe. There was the attempted murder (staged to look like a suicide) of another Connecticut prisoner Michael Austin, a white man who WRSP guards disliked because he grew up around and embraced Black urban culture and clashed with WRSP rural white guards who ridiculed him and tried to influence him with racist values. Dozens of the New Mexico prisoners were systematically beaten upon intake at WRSP as were the Connecticut prisoners. The killing of Lawrence Frazier was also featured in the documentary “Up The Ridge” and an Amnesty International report on U.S. law enforcement officials’ abuses of electric weapons. (2)

The pushback from advocates in their states was immediate! Large assemblies of families and groups from New Mexico and Connecticut protested in the WRSP parking lot and nearby town of Big Stone Gap, VA. Pressure was brought to bear on officials in these prisoners’ home states, several came to Virginia and toured WRSP. Lawsuits were filed and the media was awash with critical reports, especially about the abuses of the New Mexico and Connecticut prisoners at WRSP.

One by one these states terminated their contracts to house their prisoners at ROSP and WRSP, and Virginia was once again left with huge numbers of empty beds at these supermaxes.

With no one to fill them and need to give public justification for these prisons’ continued expensive operations while facing waves of bad publicity, VDOC had once again to change the security classification of these prisons.

In 2005 WRSP had downgraded from supermax (security level 6) to maximum security (security level 5) prison, and for the first time WRSP became a predominantly general population (GP) prison. Meantime ROSP’s population was cut in half from 1,200 to a little over 600 prisoners. A large number of minimum security prisoners were then moved to ROSP ostensibly as custodial maintenance and other workers (called “cadre workers”), they were really just bed fillers.

But still other measures had to be taken to bring in more prisoners and fill more beds and justify these prisons. This is where the gang situation arises.

Creating Gangs To Justify These Prisons:

At ROSP, the newly appointed warden, Tracey Ray, promoted a sergeant named Tony Adams who previously worked in the prison’s dog kennel to the position of lead investigator and gang specialist (Adams was ROSP’s first gang officer). Ray became warden in latter 2004 and appointed Adams as investigator/gang specialist in early 2005. A low ranking guard, James Bentley who still works as an investigator and gang specialist at ROSP today, was selected as Adams’ assistant.

This new gang-busting duo hit the ground running alongside their WRSP counterpart Sgt. Steele. These men from rural white America with no prior exposure to Blacks or Browns became self-proclaimed experts in urban Black and Brown culture and street organizations overnight. Everywhere they went and looked they saw gang activity. And this wasn’t accidental. They set out to deliberately create an organized gang problem and culture at these prisons where none existed before. This to validate their own jobs as “gang busters” and justify the continued operation of these prisons.

Before this period, the VDOC had no gang officials, no so-called STG (Security Threat Group) units nor task force, no policies on controlling gangs or gang activities, and so on, because there were no gangs in Virginia prisons.

At both ROSP and WRSP they created cellblocks in GP and solitary confinement exclusively for gang members unofficially called “gang pods.” Those assigned to these pods were people they documented and labeled as gang members. In most cases, they targeted people who were, in fact, not in gangs. There had developed a small but insignificant gang presence at ROSP and WRSP under the influence of prisoners from other states like Connecticut and New York. But by placing prisoners who weren’t gang members in blocks and cells with those who were, this led to waves of prisoners joining gangs for protection from those in these blocks who actually were gang members. It also created an isolated environment — like a hot house — where the gang culture took root and proliferated without resistance from Virginia’s local culture. Most who weren’t gang members when they entered these pods, were active gang members when they left. This created a steady cycle of non-members entering these pods and leaving as active members, so that the gang presence in these prisons multiplied overnight.

There were also some members of Central American gangs in the prisons (a result of large Salvadoran migrant



Rest in Power



Sekou Odinga 1944-2024



The longtime Black liberation activist Sekou Odinga has died at the age of 79. He was a member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity, as well as the Black Panther Party in New York City and the Black Liberation Army. After spending years underground, he was convicted in 1984 of charges related in part to his role in helping Assata Shakur escape prison. Odinga served 33 years in state and federal prison before being released. In 2016, Sekou Odinga appeared on Democracy Now! and talked about why he initially joined the Black Panthers.

Sekou Odinga: "What attracted me more than anything else was the stand against police brutality, because, like all the other ghettos in this country or Black areas of this country, police brutality was running rampant. ... That was the attraction, the big attraction, for me, personally, and many of the comrades that I came in with, because they really — we were not part of the civil rights movement to turn your other cheek. We was mostly followers of the Malcolm X position that if someone smack you, you smack him back; if someone punch you, you punch him back; that your life was the biggest and best thing you had, and you had a right to not only protect it, but to defend it by any means necessary."

Everyone who is imprisoned long enough will lose a friend they're locked up with. This is a space to memorialize, remember, and celebrate those we've lost. We invite you to submit a loved one to be remembered on these pages, so that others will know their name and know the unique light they brought into this world.



communities in Alexandria, VA) who had traditional rivalries with certain Black gangs. Initially these Browns stayed to themselves, but in the gang pods they clashed with those Blacks who had been profiled as members of the rival Black gangs. This also prompted Blacks who weren't initially in gangs to join them for protection or support-in-numbers against these Brown gangs.

In violation of VDOC policy which required screening for gang affiliations and forbade housing documented gang rivals in cells together, Adams, Bentley, and their WRSP counterparts also deliberately put rivals in the same cells, especially Blacks and Browns. Which predictably led to fights and stabbings, and cycles of revenge that they used as "proof" of organized gang violence. In fact, at WRSP administrators created a GP gang pod in a 44 cell cellblock, then moved documented rivals into the cells together. An hour later a large group of guards invaded the block and had all the prisoners stand outside their cells as they inspected their faces and hands for signs of fights. Those with marks on their faces or hands were written disciplinary infractions for being involved in "gang-related" fights — fights that officials themselves engineered. These and similar "documentations" were then used as "evidence" of a "problem with organized gang violence in Virginia prisons", for which WRSP and ROSP were now said to be needed to contain and control.

At ROSP and WRSP officials were manufacturing a gang presence and gang wars using a prison version of what Crips co-founder Stanley "Tookie" Williams observed "hood" cops and gang units did on the streets with the same outcome and purpose of justifying unneeded and abusive police and gang units. As Tookie described it in his book, *Blue Rage Black Redemption*:

"Yes America, as unbelievable as it may seem, had cops with impunity commit drivebys and other lawless acts. It was common practice for them to abduct a Crip or Bounty Hunter and drop him off in hostile territory, and then broadcast it over a loudspeaker. The predictable outcome was that the rival was either beaten or killed on the spot, which resulted in a cycle of payback. Cops would also inform opposing gangs where to find and attack a rival gang, and then say "Go handle your business." Like slaves, the gangs did exactly what their master commanded. Had they not been fueled by self-hatred, neither Crips, Bounty Hunters, nor any other Black gang would have been duped.

"The hood cops were pledged to protect and serve, but for us they were not there to help, but exploit us — and they were effective. With the cops' Machiavellian presence, the

gang epidemic escalated. When gang warfare is fed and fueled by law enforcement, funds are generated for anti-gang units. Without gangs their units would no longer exist."

In an effort to isolate me since I'm not in any gangs and it was presumed that the gangs wouldn't interact with me, I was put in A-3, one of the solitary confinement gang pods at ROSP, where I witnessed the whole scheme play out. I watched the rivalries fester in that block, often under the direct instigation of guards who played sides with the gangs, then Adams, Bentley, and others would release rivals to the progressive housing gang pods where they were put in cells together and violence immediately erupted. Guards were openly amused by the stabbings and fights they were setting up.

When Gangs Become Conscious:

I pointed out to those in the gang pod with me what was being done to them and how they were being used to justify the continued operations of ROSP and WRSP. Most agreed with what I pointed out and some refused to play into it. In 2010 I wrote an article, "Kill Yourself Or Liberate Yourself", documenting the history of the U.S. government instigating and manipulating rivalries and wars between street gangs in just this manner and calling on them to unite and return to many of their original missions of serving our communities instead of preying on them. I also discussed the uses of the gang pods at ROSP in that article. (3)

My efforts began paying off as many of those in the cellblock with me embraced the views I shared with them and joined in the historic 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes led by thousands of California prisoners protesting solitary confinement. I was then transferred out of state in early 2012, followed the next year by several who participated in the 2013 strike.

One of the gang leaders, Kofi Dankur aka L.I., who was a victim of the ROSP gang pods and out of state transfer where Virginia officials tried to set him and others up with racist white gangs in the other states (which they also did with me), wrote an article in 2022, "Blood In The Clenched Fist Alliance" (to which I wrote an introduction), where he bore witness to all of this. He opened the article stating:

"I've read Rashid's 2010 article 'Kill Yourself Or Liberate Yourself', and found it to contain perspectives which I also share. It also gives a true account of the scheme employed by Virginia officials at Red Onion State Prison to manufacture rival gang conflicts to create new justification

for continuing to operate Virginia's two supermax prisons in remote southwestern Virginia — ROSP and WRSP, after both had been repeatedly discredited for racist abuse by their almost totally white staff against a predominantly Black prisoner population and exposed as unneeded. I was one of the numerous prisoners being housed at ROSP's so-called gang pods where these rivalries were manipulated by Virginia officials. I am an identified east coast Blood leader." (4)

While in the "gang pod" in 2010, I circulated a random survey to which 18 of the 22 prisoners in the cellblock immediately responded. The responses were telling, especially concerning the systemic false labeling of prisoners as gang members by "gang specialist" Sgt. Adams and others at ROSP and his role in putting rival gang members in cells together. I wrote an article discussing that survey and what it revealed about abuses at ROSP in the victims' own words. (5) Victims who mostly didn't communicate or get along with each other, but spoke with one voice about conditions and mistreatments at ROSP.

As the gang wars became more deeply entrenched at ROSP and WRSP, many were transferred between other VDOC prisons across the state where the gang presence and conflicts followed and grew. From this process, I and others witnessed the literal creation of a huge gang presence and rivalries in Virginia's prisons where none previously existed, which also spread to the streets. All manufactured by officials at ROSP and WRSP, some of which still work at these prisons like James Bentley. The gang presence became so large and the resulting rival violence so extreme across Virginia's entire prison system that prisoners had to be separated and assigned to specific prison units based upon gang affiliations.

I was sent into domestic exile (transferred out of state) in early 2012 and returned to the Virginia prison system in late 2021. Upon my return, I found a different culture, whereas in most states, violent bangin' between rival gangs had largely stopped, while the local Virginia culture and gang culture have somewhat merged. Now there was still bonding based upon what city one is from but also a bonding across territories based upon gang affiliation. In many cases bonds based upon one's city of origin take priority over gang affiliation, while in other cases it's the reverse. The culture is still evolving.

If the public could have seen and known that prison officials caused the development and proliferation of gangs and gang wars in Virginia and the consequent violence and suffering endured by those in these prisons that spilled over

into our outside communities, there would have definitely been massive push back against ROSP and WRSP. And there still should be push back now demanding that these places be closely scrutinized by the public and closed down. These remote prisons are a danger not benefit to their prisoners and the outside communities.

Dare To Struggle Dare To Win!
All Power To The People!

Endnotes:

*This article began as part of a larger article on abuses in Virginia's two remote supermax prisons, Red Onion and Wallens Ridge State Prisons. But a number of readers felt the subject of the development of gangs and spread of gang wars in Virginia's prisons at the prompting of Virginia prison officials warranted an article of its own.

- Jamie Fellner, "Red Onion State Prison: Super-Maximum Security Confinement In Virginia" (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1999: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/redonion>)
- Amnesty International, "Cruelty In Control? The Stun Belt And Other Electroshock Weapons In Law Enforcement" (2002) http://totse2.com/totse/end/law/justice_for_all/6resforu.htm
- Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Kill Yourself Or Liberate Yourself: The Real U.S. Imperialist Policy On Gang Violence Versus The Revolutionary Alternative" (2010) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=6264>
- Kofi Donkur, a.k.a., L.I., "Blood In The Clenched Fist Alliance" (2022) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=3195>
- Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "When Given A Voice The Voiceless Speak As One: A Random Survey Confirms Racism, Abuse, and Corruption at Virginia's Red Onion State Prison (2010) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=435>



After 30 Years, the First Program to Offer Pell Grants to Incarcerated Students Has Launched

by Nazish Dholakia

from Vera.org

March 2024

On a Monday afternoon this January, 16 students gathered in a room at California's Pelican Bay State Prison. They are the first cohort of incarcerated students enrolled in Cal Poly Humboldt's bachelor's degree in communications program—one of the first bachelor's degree programs to be taught in person at a high-security facility in California.

It's also the first prison education program (PEP) approved by

Resist, My People, Resist Them

by Dareen Tatour, a Palestinian woman, who was charged with inciting terrorism in 2015 and spent several months in jail for writing and sharing this poem.

Resist, my people, resist them.
In Jerusalem, I dressed my wounds and breathed
my sorrows
And carried the soul in my palm
For an Arab Palestine.
I will not succumb to the “peaceful solution,”
Never lower my flags
Until I evict them from my land.
I cast them aside for a coming time.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the settler’s robbery
And follow the caravan of martyrs.
Shred the disgraceful constitution
Which imposed degradation and humiliation
And deterred us from restoring justice.
They burned blameless children;
As for Hadil, they sniped her in public,
Killed her in broad daylight.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the colonialist’s onslaught.
Pay no mind to his agents among us
Who chain us with the peaceful illusion.
Do not fear doubtful tongues;
The truth in your heart is stronger,
As long as you resist in a land
That has lived through raids and victory.
So Ali called from his grave:
Resist, my rebellious people.
Write me as prose on the agarwood;
My remains have you as a response.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist, my people, resist them.



a street art mural in West Belfast expressing solidarity with prisoners of war from independence movements in Ireland and Palestine.

The Palestinian prisoners’ movement has always been at the center of the Palestinian liberation movement and remains so today. Palestinian prisoners stand and struggle on the front lines daily for return and liberation for all of Palestine and all Palestinians.

-Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network



Palestinian artist Taqi Spateen in front of the mural of George Floyd he painted on a border wall constructed by Israel.

the United States Department of Education (ED) to offer Pell Grants to incarcerated students, who will be able to access this federal financial assistance to pay for school starting in the fall of 2024.

“We’re trying to provide as close to the main campus experience as possible for the students inside,” said Steve Ladwig, the director of the Transformative and Restorative Education Center at Cal Poly Humboldt, who also manages the program at Pelican Bay.

Access to Pell Grants for incarcerated students was officially restored in July 2023—following a nearly three-decade ban that slashed opportunities for people in prison to pursue higher education.

In recent years, the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative provided a limited number of participating colleges with the ability to access Pell Grants to serve students in prison. From 2016 to 2022, more than 40,000 students participated in the program, which expanded twice and now includes 163 colleges in 48 states, plus the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and Puerto Rico. The initiative’s success paved the way for the wholesale reinstatement of Pell Grants for incarcerated people, which will enable far greater access to postsecondary education for people in prison as colleges launch programs targeted to them.

The benefits of college in prison extend far beyond the walls of the classroom. In addition to creating safer environments for people behind bars, college programs help ensure that people in prison can secure well-paying jobs when they return home and decrease the odds that they will return to prison. Vera estimates that at least 760,000 people in prison are eligible to receive Pell Grants to fund their college education. With more than 600,000 people leaving state or federal prison every year, having a college education can significantly benefit not only incarcerated students, but also their families and communities.

The rollout of Pell Grant access:

Pell reinstatement last July marked a significant step forward, but PEPs have been slower to materialize than some prospective students may have expected. This is in part because ED’s regulations require that postsecondary institutions follow certain steps to create a PEP that is eligible for Pell Grant funds. The regulations are designed to ensure that colleges offer high-quality programs that operate in the best interest of the students, which is especially important because students in prison often lack choice. In many cases, they only have one—or very few—degree programs available to them.

Now, eight months after Pell reinstatement, 44 state corrections departments, as well as the BOP, have established processes to select and approve new college partners. These “Pell Grant-ready” agencies oversee 1.17 million people—or 97 percent of people incarcerated in the United States. Vera is working

with the remaining six states and Puerto Rico to ensure their processes are in place and that they are ready to receive applications from colleges by June 30 of this year.

Although Cal Poly Humboldt’s program is the only one to receive approval from ED so far (two other program applications are pending department review), an informal survey by Vera found that at least 43 state corrections agencies have approved, or will soon approve, at least one new program.

“What we know for sure is that students are ready to enroll,” said Ruth Delaney, director of Vera’s Unlocking Potential initiative. “They’ve waited nearly 30 years for this opportunity. It’s time for colleges and corrections to step up and get these programs up and running. Balancing the need for more prison education programs with the need for quality protections takes time, but we want to see the pace of change accelerate in the years ahead, as corrections and accreditors become more familiar with these new processes and colleges have more examples of high-quality programs to look to as models.”

Bringing colleges and corrections together

Malisa Kringle, assistant deputy director of programs at the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, said that, with Pell reinstatement, the state is looking to develop a “strategic, collaborative, and less siloed approach” to postsecondary education in prison. Nebraska is one of at least 25 states that have established a consortium to bring colleges and correction officials together to gather input and streamline processes.

“I wanted to get everyone at the table in the same room, collaborating and working together with the same goal in mind, to really create a robust postsecondary system within our state prisons,” said Kringle.

Ben Jones, education director at the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WIDOC), said the department has actively reached out to colleges in the state and engages with those that express interest. It held a webinar last year for potential college partners.

“You can’t create a good structure with only one side,” said Jones.

WIDOC wants to be intentional about how it expands beyond its current offerings. There are several online programs available to incarcerated students, but fewer in-person options. Currently, the state offers only one in-person bachelor’s degree program, which is available at only one facility.

“We need to really think about what we do face-to-face, or other hybrid mechanisms, because I do think there’s capacity to expand into bachelor’s degree programs,” said Jones.

The landscape of higher education in prison and incarcerated students’ needs varies greatly nationwide. College-in-prison

programs face unique challenges that community-based colleges do not, from helping students fill out FAFSA forms, to navigating technology limitations, to constraints in offering in-person classes at prisons in remote locations. But Pell reinstatement also offers tremendous opportunity for people in prison and their families, as well as for our communities.

“We want to see the promise of this legislation become real,” said Delaney. “We want everybody who’s interested in college to be able to go to college.”

To make that happen, colleges need to launch programs that make high-quality postsecondary education accessible to all people in prison. The hundreds of thousands of people in prison who are newly eligible to receive Pell Grants can only take advantage of this opportunity if there are ED-approved programs available to them. And corrections departments should actively engage colleges to develop college-in-prison programs.

Ladwig is thinking about what’s next for Cal Poly Humboldt. He said that within the next five years, the college would like to be able to offer three different bachelor’s degree options to incarcerated students.

“Having three choices is better than one,” Ladwig said. “We want students to get out of prison with the degree that they want, instead of the only thing that was available.”

To achieve this expansion, colleges and corrections departments need to work in close collaboration.

“Our vision is to really have as many opportunities available to the people in our care as possible,” said Jones at WIDOC. “Both [corrections departments and colleges] have to be talking early and often about what that actually looks like.”



FCC closes “final loopholes” that keep prison phone prices exorbitantly high

by Jon Brodtkin

from ARSTechnica.com

July 2024

The Federal Communications Commission today voted to lower price caps on prison phone calls and closed a loophole that allowed prison telecoms to charge high rates for intrastate calls. Today’s vote will cut the price of interstate calls in half and set price caps on intrastate calls for the first time.

The FCC said it “voted to end exorbitant phone and video call rates that have burdened incarcerated people and their families for decades. Under the new rules, the cost of a 15-minute phone call will drop to \$0.90 from as much as \$11.35 in large jails and, in small jails, to \$1.35 from \$12.10.”

The new rules are expected to take effect in January 2025 for all prisons and for jails with at least 1,000 incarcerated people. The rate caps would take effect in smaller jails in April 2025.

Worth Rises, a nonprofit group advocating for prison reform, said it “estimates that the new rules will impact 83 percent of incarcerated people (about 1.4 million) and save impacted families at least \$500 million annually.”

New power over intrastate calls:

The FCC has taken numerous votes to lower prison phone rates over the years, but today’s is particularly significant. While the FCC was previously able to cap prices of interstate calls, an attempt to set prices for intrastate calls was struck down in court in 2017.

Prison phone companies could sue again. But the FCC said it now has authority over intrastate prison phone prices because of the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act, which was approved by Congress and signed by President Biden in January 2023. The new law “empowered the FCC to close the final loopholes in the communications system,” the commission said.

The 2023 law—named for a grandmother who campaigned for lower prison phone rates—“removes the principal statutory limitations that had prevented the Commission from setting comprehensive just and reasonable rates,” the FCC said. Specifically, the law removed “limits to the Commission’s ability to regulate rates for intrastate calls and video communications.”

More than half of prison audio call traffic is intrastate, with the calling and called parties both in the same state, according to data in a draft of the FCC order released before the meeting.

The FCC’s work to reduce prison phone rates “was not always embraced by the courts,” Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said today. “We were told—over and over again—that the commission did not have the authority to address every aspect of these rates, because while interstate calls fell within our jurisdiction, intrastate calls did not.”

Previously, the FCC imposed price caps on interstate calls ranging from \$0.14 to \$0.21 per minute for audio calls, depending on the size of the facility. Going forward, a uniform set of price caps ranging from \$0.06 to \$0.12 per minute will apply to both interstate and intrastate calls.

Ban on other fees

The FCC also adopted video call rate caps for the first time. The video call caps range from \$0.11 to \$0.25 per minute. These caps are classified as “interim” and could be lowered in the future.

Other fees will be prohibited, too. “Today, using this new law,

Prisoner Study Circles

Many prisoners of conscience speak of turning the prison into a university. A common way to do this is to host a study group: reading a certain text, discussing a certain topic, diving into an aspect of history, etc. If you and some friends are interested in putting together a study circle, reach out to us and let us know what topics and/or texts you're interested in and how many of you there are, and we'll see what we can do to help provide you with materials!

Reflections from My Own Study Group Efforts

By Bigg-O, from the zine [How To Start Your Own Study Group In Prison](#)

The study group that I lead is completely voluntary. We meet during our recreation time. I usually open the group with a question about what they may know about an event or era in history, or if they know of their genealogy and who may be or who may have actually been a famous or well-known family member of theirs.

This usually gets people to open up, and at this point is where I infuse a story or ask another question about history. I sometimes get a reply that's negative, and that's when I give the group some hidden facts of history and our culture, or if I have a Latino or Hispanic brother around I'll ask him history of his people.

The reason for this is simple. This is done to show that knowing your true history is something that brings about pride in your heritage and makes you want the best for your people. Most of all it breaks down the self-hate that we experience without even knowing it.

I make this group as interactive as I can. I express the need to allow brothers to open up about how they feel and or view the world as it is through their eyes and experience. Also there has to be an understanding, within the group, that nothing said is wrong or dumb, that everyone's point matters, and I make sure everyone has a chance to speak their piece.

The goal of this study is to teach a new way of seeing oneself, to help brothers see that being intelligent or educated isn't lame or weird, as a lot of the younger brothers have been made to believe. And most of all, it is to bring about unity that is needed to bring about change in the prisons of NC, and to invoke the spirit of the warrior within, so that he will fight for his family and his community, if and when he is set free one day.

In my opinion the best part about enlightening my group about their history—either African, Afro-American, Latino or any forms of the diaspora studies—the best part is when I see the topic take root, and when I see the members of the group reteach what we just discussed to others in their peer circle. It lets me know that I am getting through to the group, and just maybe their mind is changing into a political mindset, instead of the reactionary state of mind that a lot of brothers are currently in. My focus is to ignite the proactive thought process that allows for the mind of the revolutionary to grow into direct action, instead of just talk.

I always ask the question, “How many of you want change?” And at times I get “No” as an answer, or I get a few people who want to make a change but don't have ways or means of effecting change. So as an exercise in my group I use a format I call “Expressions of Self.” This is where I pick a group member and direct him to speak upon any topic that he would like to see change around. The catch is that “expressions of self” is done on the fly—at a moment's notice it could be your turn. I think at times it helps but at times it is hard cause some guys think there's a right answer and there isn't any right or wrong answers. The only thing a group member needs to do is be able to defend his position and thought process, which in essence will prepare him for the backlash of those who oppose his views.

Because I am the grandson and great nephew of active members of the Black Liberation Army, and the great grandson of the only African-American woman in the city of Lincolnton, NC to have a residential street named in her honor, her being the reason for the city's creation of the Housing Authority, I was reared differently than most of my peer group. Being from the west coast and having West Indian blood ties to the islands, brought out my need for change, for rebellion against the established government. My hunger for active resistance was stoked into a fire that still burns bright almost 50 years later.

When you know and understand where you come from you can always know where you are going and where you want to go. But most of all you know where you need to be to help. In my lifetime I've always put forth the effort to help, save, and educate the people, even at the cost of my own freedom.

we fix what has been wrong for too long,” Rosenworcel said. “We reduce calling rates by more than half. We stop tacked-on costs like ancillary fees and prohibit special fees for site commissions. We make clear these policies apply to both interstate and intrastate rates. We also set rates for video calls for the first time. On top of that, we strengthen accessibility requirements for incarcerated people with disabilities and improve consumer disclosures.”

Site commissions are payments that phone companies make to prisons and jails in exchange for the exclusive right to offer service to inmates. FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks today said that banning the commissions will “end the practice of provider kickbacks to correctional facilities and payments for costs irrelevant to providing services so callers will no longer be forced to bear the financial burden of these costs.”

The nonprofit Prison Policy Institute said that prison phone companies charge ancillary fees for things “like making a deposit to fund an account.” The ban on those fees “also effectively blocks a practice that we have been campaigning against for years: companies charging fees to consumers who choose to make single calls rather than fund a calling account, and deliberately steering new consumers to this higher-cost option in order to increase fee revenue,” the group said.

The ancillary fee ban is a “technical-sounding change,” but will help “eliminate some of the industry’s dirtiest tricks that shortchange both the families and the facilities,” the group said. FCC: Revenue will still exceed costs

The FCC’s draft order said that even with the new caps, potential “revenues for eight out of 12 IPCS [Incarcerated People’s Communications Services] providers exceed their total reported costs when excluding site commissions and safety and security categories that generally are not used and useful in the provision of IPCS. These eight firms represent over 90 percent of revenue, 96 percent of [average jail and prison population], and 96 percent of billed and unbilled minutes in the dataset.”

Worth Rises said that the “primary factors driving the FCC’s lower rate caps is the exclusion of security and surveillance costs as well as the exclusion of commissions. For decades, the cost of an ever-expanding suite of invasive surveillance services has been passed on to incarcerated people and their loved ones. With today’s new rules, prison telecoms will be barred from recovering the cost of the majority of such services from ratepayers.”

The price-cap order was fully supported by the FCC’s three Democrats and Republican Nathan Simington. Republican Brendan Carr approved in part and concurred in part, saying he had concerns about the rate structure.



Black Atlanta Organizers Call for Summer of Resistance

Back in May, a coalition of Black Atlanta organizers announced a campaign beginning with a community-building event on Juneteenth and ending with a festival on September 2nd. As the epicenter of the Stop Cop City campaign, and much solidarity with the Palestinian resistance, the crew hopes to maintain and reignite energies through demonstrations, rallies, teach-ins, and that final three-day music festival.

“The movement to stop Cop City is part of the ongoing story of Black and indigenous resistance and fight for liberation,” says Atlanta organizer Rukia Rogers, member of the Weelaunee Coalition. “Our fight is for a reimagined world; a world where Rayshard Brooks and Tortuguita would be alive; a world where police budgets would dry up instead of our rivers.”

The Stop Cop City campaign, attempting to prevent the construction of a militarized police training facility and preserve the Weelaunee Forest, has suffered significant repression. With heavy-handed charges falling on the resilient shoulders of participants accused of everything from flyering neighborhoods, attending a music festival, all the way to acts of sabotage and arson against the companies involved in the construction (and the police themselves), the movement has refused to bow. RICO charges befell a large swath of previous arrestees (and legal supporters), a Grand Jury has been convened as far away as South Carolina targeting at least one anarchist, and last year young Tortuguita was murdered by cops with their hands in the air during a raid on a protest encampment. Despite this, it has remained an intersection of resistance across racial lines, appearing as a realization of our common cause, and refuses to quit.

The connection between the struggles for Black and Palestinian liberation, too, have been illustrated time and again, perhaps most famously when the tear gas being fired by police during the Ferguson uprising in 2014 was shown to be the same brand being fired by the Israeli Defense Forces in occupied Palestine. Palestinians shared tips in that moment over social media about how those in the street after the murder of Mike Brown could protect themselves from the tear gas and continue to fight the police.

“Our struggles are deeply interconnected to the global movement for freedom as we witness the same imperial forces inflict the same violence and displacement in Palestine, Sudan, and the Congo,” Rogers says. “The ‘Summer of Resistance’ is a call to action and invitation to joyfully and courageously reclaim our communities and a world worthy of us all.”

So the organizers have asked for others with common cause to submit their events and actions under the “Summer of Resistance” banner.

Polyvagal Skills

Maintaining mental health in environments where we have little control, like prison, can feel daunting. Polyvagal skills, based on the science of how the brain survives, help us understand and work with our brain and body to create a sense of comfort, clearer thinking, and stability, or simply the absence of distress.

The Science Behind Polyvagal Skills: Our autonomic nervous system (ANS) controls involuntary functions and responds to danger. Traumatic events, especially early in life, teach the ANS what signifies danger, sometimes leading to unwanted reactions. Polyvagal skills help us manage these responses.

Skills for Intense Emotions: Using the Five Senses:

- **Sight: Focus on Details:** Look around and focus on small details in your environment. Pick an object and examine its color, shape, and texture. Notice things you haven't paid attention to before.
- **Sound: Listening to Sounds:** Close your eyes and focus on the sounds around you. Identify as many different sounds as you can, like distant conversations, footsteps, or even your own breathing.
- **Smell: Scent Awareness:** If you have access to something with a distinct smell (like soap or a piece of fruit), take a moment to focus on the scent. Breathe it in deeply and notice any memories or feelings it evokes.
- **Taste: Mindful Eating:** If possible, take a small piece of food, or candy and eat it slowly, paying close attention to its taste and texture. Notice how it feels in your mouth and the different flavors you can identify.
- **Touch: Texture Exploration:** Hold something with an interesting texture, such as fabric or a small object. Focus on how it feels in your hands, noticing its temperature, weight, and any unique features.
- **Acupressure Breathing:** Find the space between your thumb and forefinger, pinch it gently, and massage. Breathe in through your nose, filling your belly, and exhale slowly through your mouth, making the exhale longer than the inhale. Switch hands if needed, continuing until you feel a shift in your body. A lot of people really like this one, and it's easy to remember.

Additional Polyvagal Grounding Skills:

- **Vocalization: Humming or Singing:** Humming or singing a soothing tune can stimulate the vagus nerve, promoting a calming effect on the body. Low tones are especially grounding. See how low you can sing for fun, and feel relaxed while you're doing it!
- **Movement: Gentle Exercise:** Engage in light physical activity such as walking or stretching. Movement helps regulate the nervous system. **Rocking:** Rocking back and forth while sitting or standing can provide a calming effect. It can feel nice to rock from side to side, gently tapping each thigh with your hands, as if your hands are walking.
- **Visualization: Safe Place Visualization:** Close your eyes and imagine a place where you feel safe and peaceful. Focus on the details of this place and immerse yourself in the feelings of safety and calm it brings. **Grounding Visualization:** Imagine roots growing from your feet into the ground, anchoring you and providing stability.
- **Engaging the Vagus Nerve: Foot Massage:** Massaging your feet can stimulate the vagus nerve and promote relaxation. **Hand Massage:** Similarly, massaging your hands can have a calming effect.

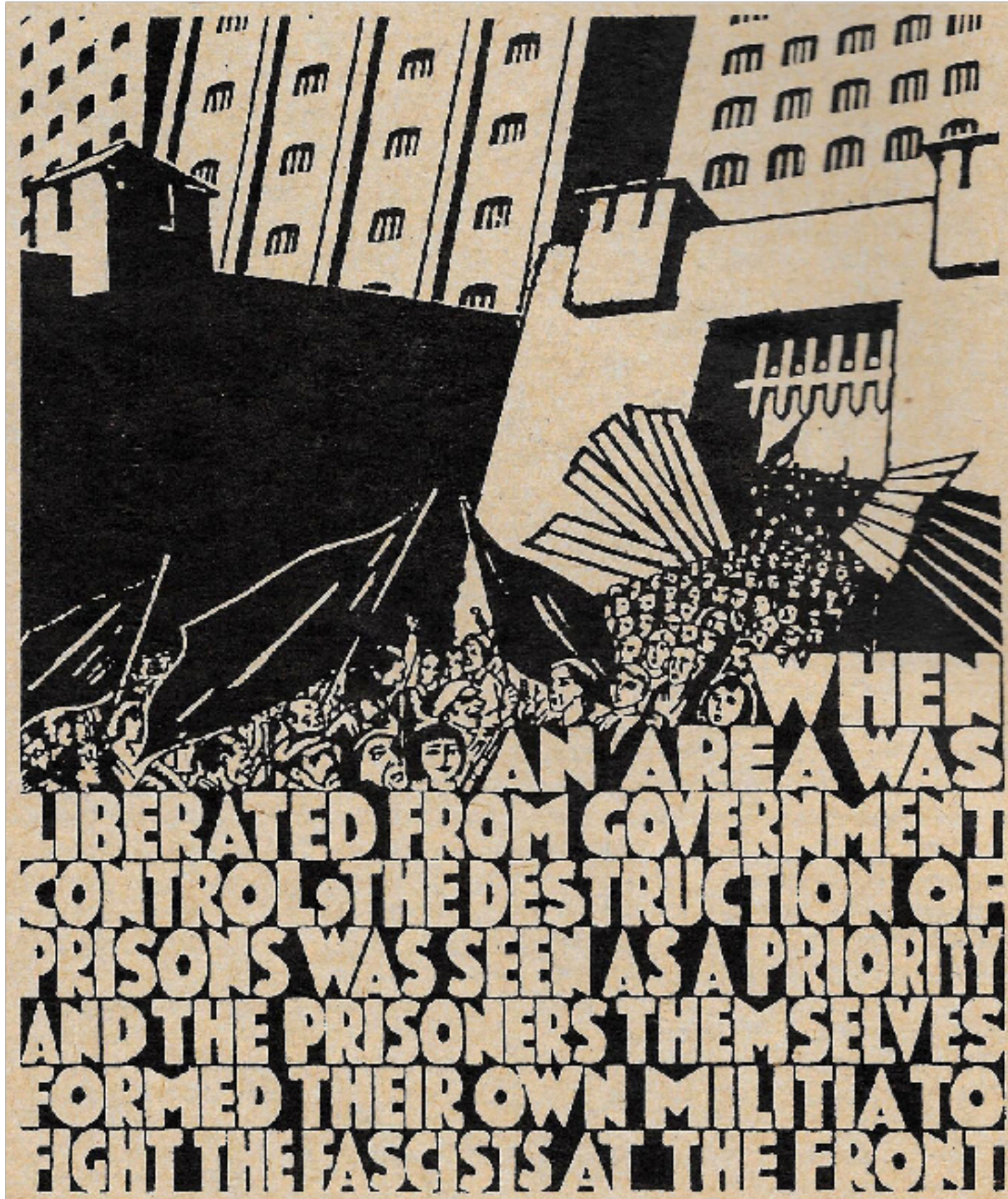
Polyvagal Skills for everyday relaxation and regulation:

- **Laughter: Read, Draw, or Recall Something Funny:** If you have access to humorous books or can recall funny memories or jokes, take time to laugh. Laughter stimulates the vagus nerve and reduces stress.
- **Creative Expression: Drawing or Writing:** Try drawing, doodling, or writing. Expressing yourself creatively can be soothing and help process emotions. **Drawing comics** can be especially healing. **Origami or Paper Crafts:** If you have access to paper, or even some wrappers, making simple origami or paper crafts can be a fun and calming activity.
- **Rhythmic Activities: Drumming:** Use your hands to create rhythmic patterns on a surface like a bed or a notebook. Think of it like a practice drum pad that someone would use on the outside. The repetitive motion can be grounding, and it's a way to get creative.
- **Repetitive Motion: Knitting, crochet, weaving, braiding, making a bracelet, and anything that has repetitive motion** can be extremely soothing. It may take some ingenuity, but one can weave with string, old ripped t-shirt strips pulled tight into yarn, paper, and even chip bags. Knitting can be done with pencils, etc. Get creative with the stuff available in commissary, you may figure out something really cool.
- **Mindful Games: Word Games:** Engage in word games like crossword puzzles or word searches, if you can get access to some. They can help focus your mind and provide a sense of accomplishment. **Memory Games:** Challenge yourself with memory games, like remembering a list of items or trying to remember a song that starts with each letter of the alphabet

By practicing these Polyvagal grounding skills, you can better manage intense emotions and stress, promoting a greater sense of groundedness and well-being. It's okay if certain coping techniques don't work for you. That's why we try to learn lots of different ones. Just keep what works and what brings you relief, comfort, or peace.

So far, we are only aware of one action outside of Atlanta – the sabotage of ten OMNY transit payment machines in New York City, causing an estimated \$40,000 in damage. The actors trace OMNY’s parent company’s contracts in a communique, connecting them to the Department of Homeland Security and an advanced surveillance system, which will likely be available to Zionist forces upon completion, “through DHS’s Enhanced Border Security Partnership, which promises rapid mutual biometric intelligence sharing among the Zionist entity, US, UK, and EU.”

The private companies involved in these endeavors are present in many major cities’ transit systems, from Atlanta to Chicago, and overseas, furthering the reach of police and national guard troops already present in the NYC subways. The resistance, too, seems likely to continue “a sustained, militant, and decentralized campaign targeting the multitude of appendages of the settler-colonial so-called United States, its Zionist client government, and their many accomplices in promoting a genocidal agenda in Palestine that is killing tens of thousands.”



Plant Profile: Passionflower

The isolation of prison extends beyond separating humans; it also separates the imprisoned from most of the rest of the world, from nature, from animals, from plants, all things that are vital to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. But for those who are allowed time out in the yard, there remain small opportunities for exploration and encounter. Here is a brief profile of a plant you may be able to find growing near you.



Common name:

Passionflower

Scientific name:

Passiflora incarnata

How to identify:

The unique and mesmerizing flower shown above

is impossible to miss and unlike anything else. While it looks fragile, the flower actually persists for quite some time, from mid-summer to fall. The leaves have 3 lobes. The leaves of Giant Ragweed look similar, but the way to distinguish them is that Passionflower is a vine, grabbing on with its many little tendrils, and can be quite an aggressive one. It can take over a fence or a trellis in no time. The fruits, which can also persist from mid-summer to fall, are round, just larger than a golf ball, and a green that blends in with the leaves. You are likely to see this plant crawling with ants: it attracts ants by offering “extrafloral” nectar and the ants defend it against other insects that could harm the plant. You are also likely to see carpenter bees buzzing around, as they are the only pollinators of Passionflower!

Encountering Passionflower: Passionflower’s main claim-to-fame is as a *relaxing* herb. Primarily this is used to relax the nervous system, but it can also relax heart palpitations, muscle spasms, and coughing from the lungs. It can cool down inflammation and help with pain. In the nervous system relaxation, it is specific for racing, spiraling, and repetitive thoughts. See the image below of the tendrils - that is a physical representation of this state of mind! It may also help to regulate the vagus nerve, ease insomnia, and soothe withdrawal from drugs or alcohol. All parts of the plant are safe and edible, but usually the leaves are used medicinally. They can be brewed as tea or eaten. Some report that in high enough doses it can actually excite instead of relax. The white fleshy pulp of the fruit is also eaten and has a mild flavor.



Running Down the Walls

Running Down the Walls is non-competitive 5K and political education event in support of political prisoners and prisoners of war. It happens every fall across North America. RDTW was started in 1999, and coordinates groups, supporters, and formerly incarcerated people on the outside getting together on the same day and time that comrades inside who have access to yard, and running and walking around their exercise areas. It has raised money for the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's stipends and support materials to prisoners - to date over \$240,000. You don't have to run. You can walk, roll, otherwise exercise, or just gather. This year Running Down the Walls is happening on Sunday September 15th. Let us know if you plan to join us where ever you are!

Bloomington



**RUNNING
DOWN
THE
WALLS**

Sunday September 15th
at 1pm in Bryan Park

Register through August at
bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org

Run, walk,
or roll.

An anti-competitive 5k to raise money for prisoners

Writing to Prisoners

Since prisoners are often transferred between facilities, we won't print addresses that can quickly become outdated. Instead, we'll direct you to the Indiana DOC "Offender Database" on their website. You can look up their current location with their DOC# (listed on Table of Contents). We use the number because the names they use are often not the state name that the DOC lists them under. And then look up the mailing address for that facility. Correspondence and engagement with what they've written here is welcome.

Some tips for writing to prisoners: Be clear about your intentions. Share something of yourself and also be curious to learn more about them. If you're not sure where to start, reference ideas they have written about. Don't say anything sketchy or incriminating for yourself or others. Assume that everything you write is being copied and read by prison administrators. Use only blue or black ink on white, lined paper in plain, white envelopes. Keep in mind that prison is, in many ways, the epitome of toxic masculinity and saturated with problematic and harmful ideas and social norms. Prisoners often will not have the latest language or frameworks for social justice. Be generous and seek to understand their different experiences, but also don't be afraid to engage and share your own experiences. Be mindful of power disparities between people who are incarcerated and those who aren't.

If you prefer to correspond online, you can set up an account at web.connectnetwork.com

Welcome to the exercise portion of the issue!

It's likely many of you have developed routines for increasing or maintaining fitness inside, but for those who are looking to build up your practice or learn new work-outs, we aim to provide some options here. We would love to hear requests for content, should you be curious about increasing strength and flexibility, or making sure you're doing a move correctly-let us know what you'd like to see!

The squat is one of the most basic yet effective athletic movements. In just one exercise, you work your quads, hamstrings, glutes, hips, and inner thighs.

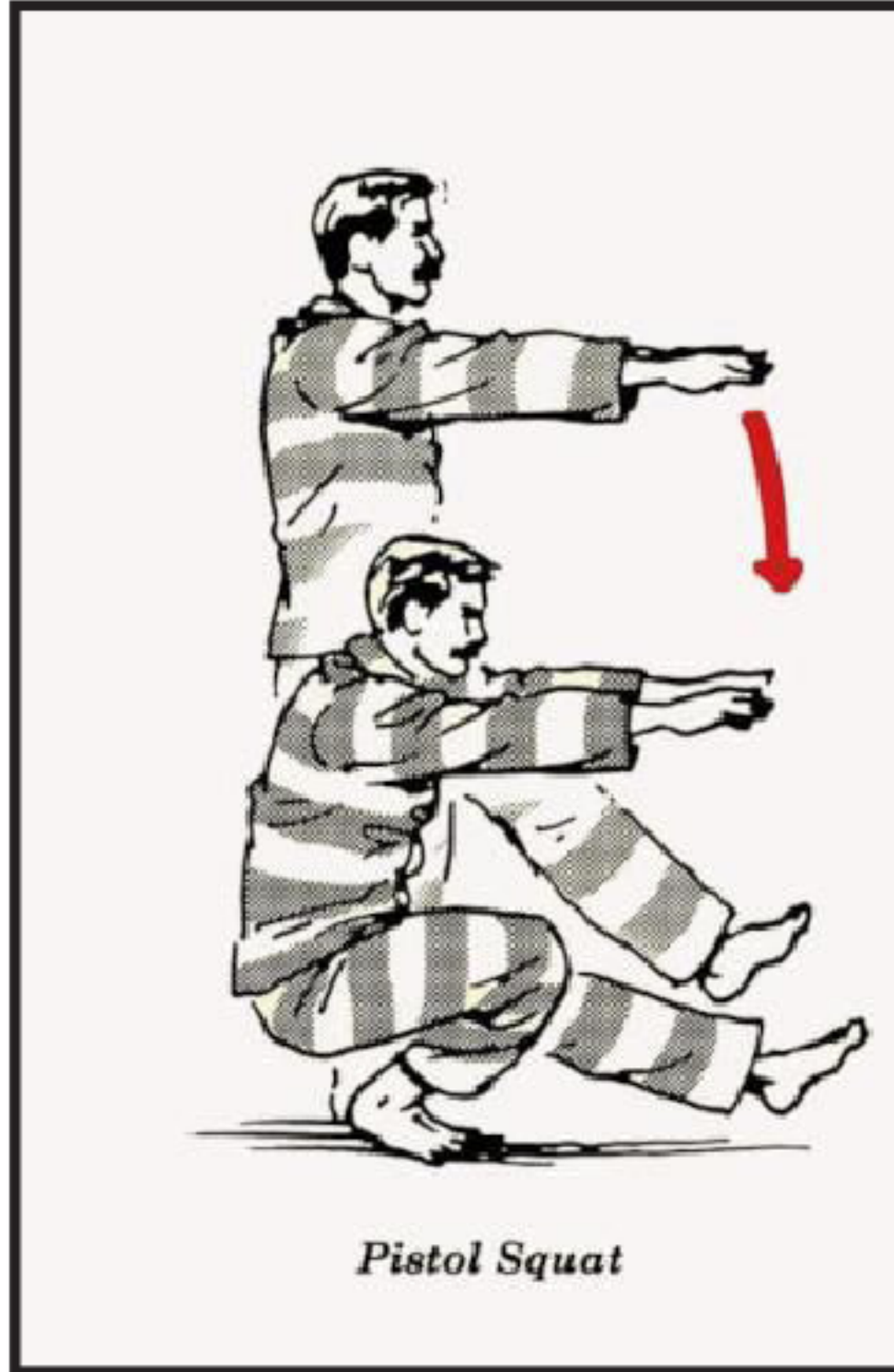
Squat: The traditional prisoner body-weight squat is performed by placing your hands behind your head. Squat down until your thighs are below parallel. Come up. That's one rep.

Add Weight: While you might not have access to a barbell, you can find odd objects in your environment that you can hoist up on your shoulders or hold in front of your chest. Once you've got your desired weight, simply squat.

Squat Jumps: Used to build explosiveness. Perform a prisoner squat as you normally would, but when you reach the bottom

of the squat explode up and jump off the ground as high as you can. When your feet are back on the ground, immediately sink into another squat and jump again.

Pistol Squat: A pistol squat is a one-legged full squat. The leg that you're not squatting with sticks out right in front of you when you're in the squat position. When you're at the bottom of the squat, you sort of look like a pistol, hence the name. It's a beast to do and will take months to work up to.



One of the best exercises to help you segue into a pistol squat is to perform the assisted variety. Simply grab a pole or some other sturdy object in front of you and lower yourself into a one-legged squat position and use the pole to help pull yourself up. Eventually, you can take off these training wheels and do a freestanding one.

Two potential ways to approach these exercises:

1. Exercise to failure. For hypertrophy and endurance, simply do one set of each exercise for as many reps as you can.
2. Instead of having a set time period where you try to crank out as many reps

as you can, you can perform reps throughout the day. You might set up a system where every half hour, you perform 10 basic squats. Assuming you're up for 12 hours a day, that's 240 squats every day.



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