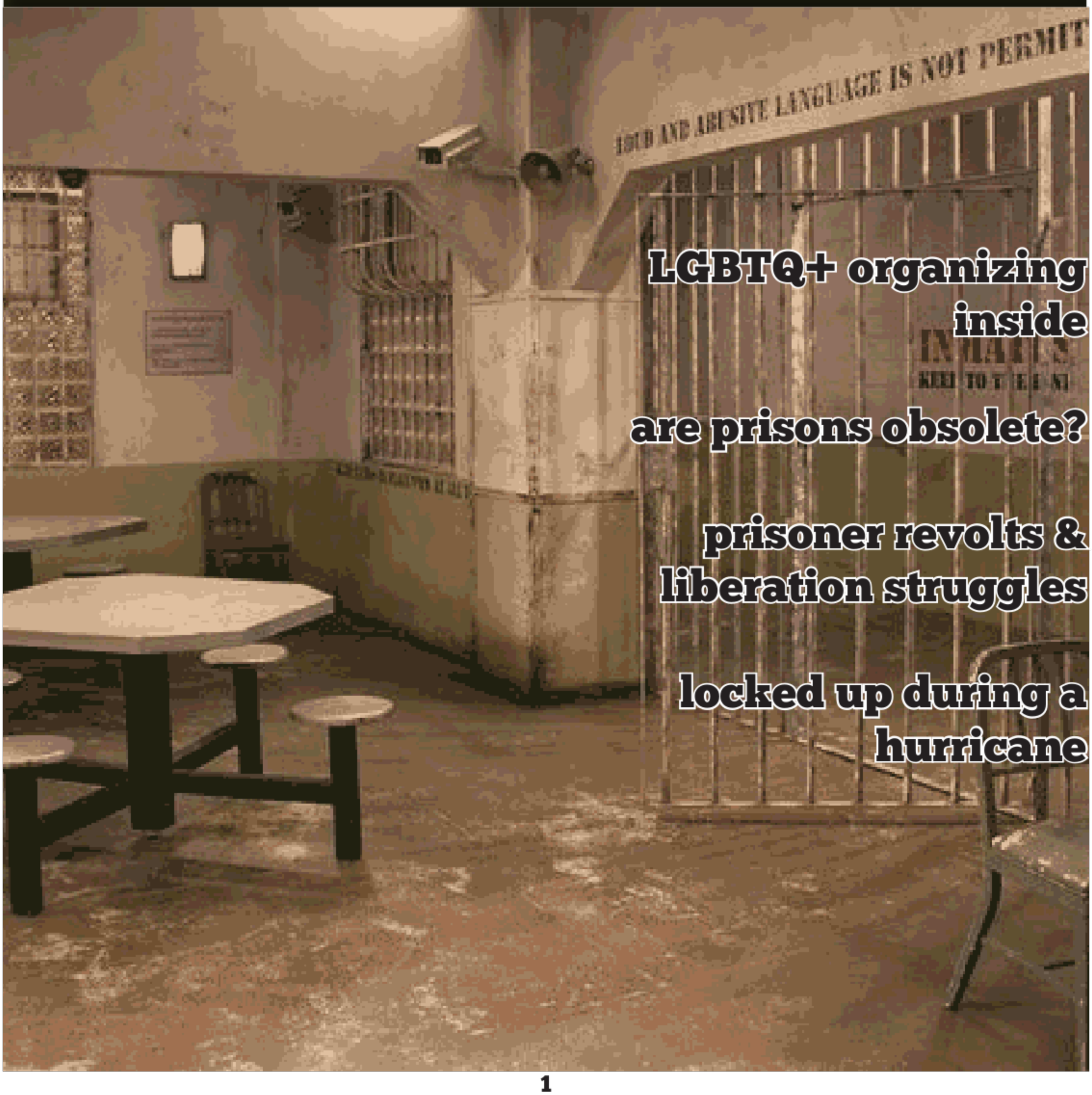
TIME/CUT

Indiana Prison Newsletter

Issue 15 · Fall 2024



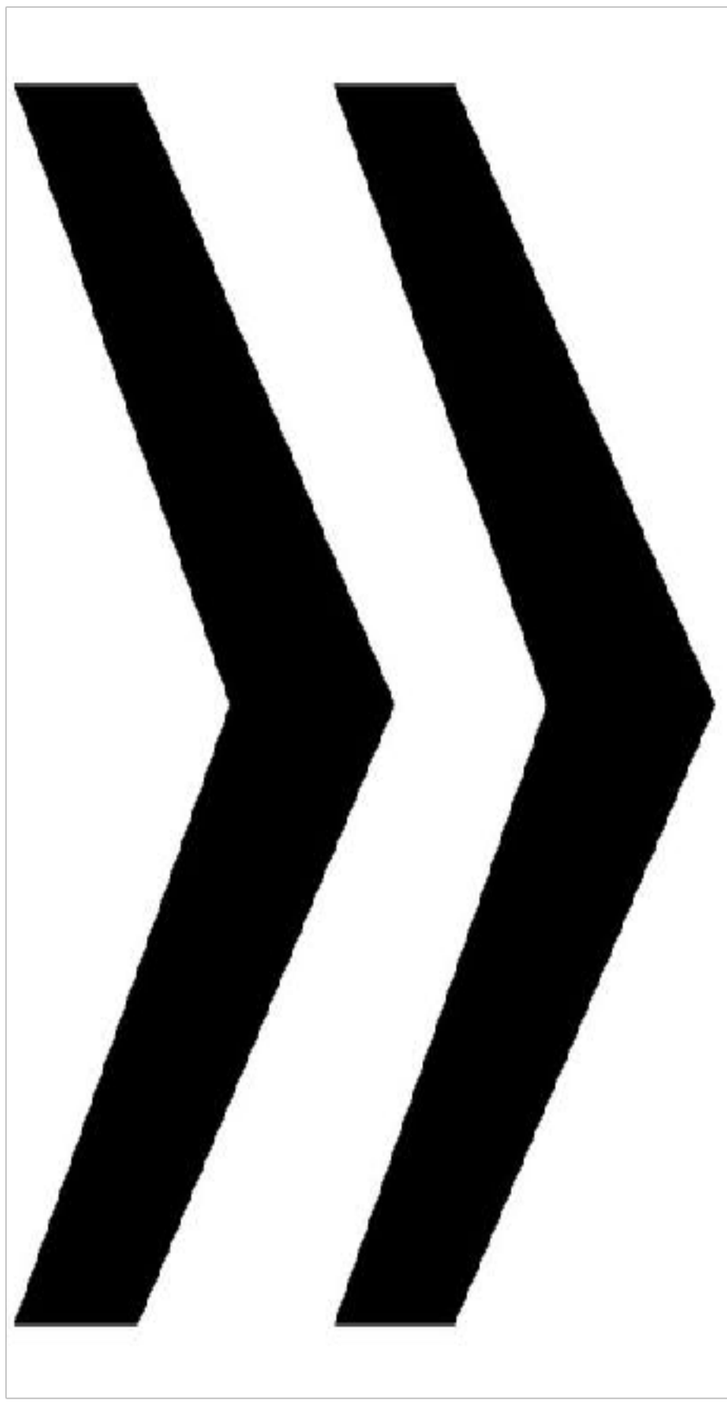
TIME/cut is a quarterly publication for Indiana prisoners and their families and friends. It includes news, analysis, and resources from inside and outside the walls and around the world. The articles in the publication do not necessarily reflect on its contributors, creators, readers, distributors,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

5868 E 71st St
Suite E #105
Indianapolis, IN 46220

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!

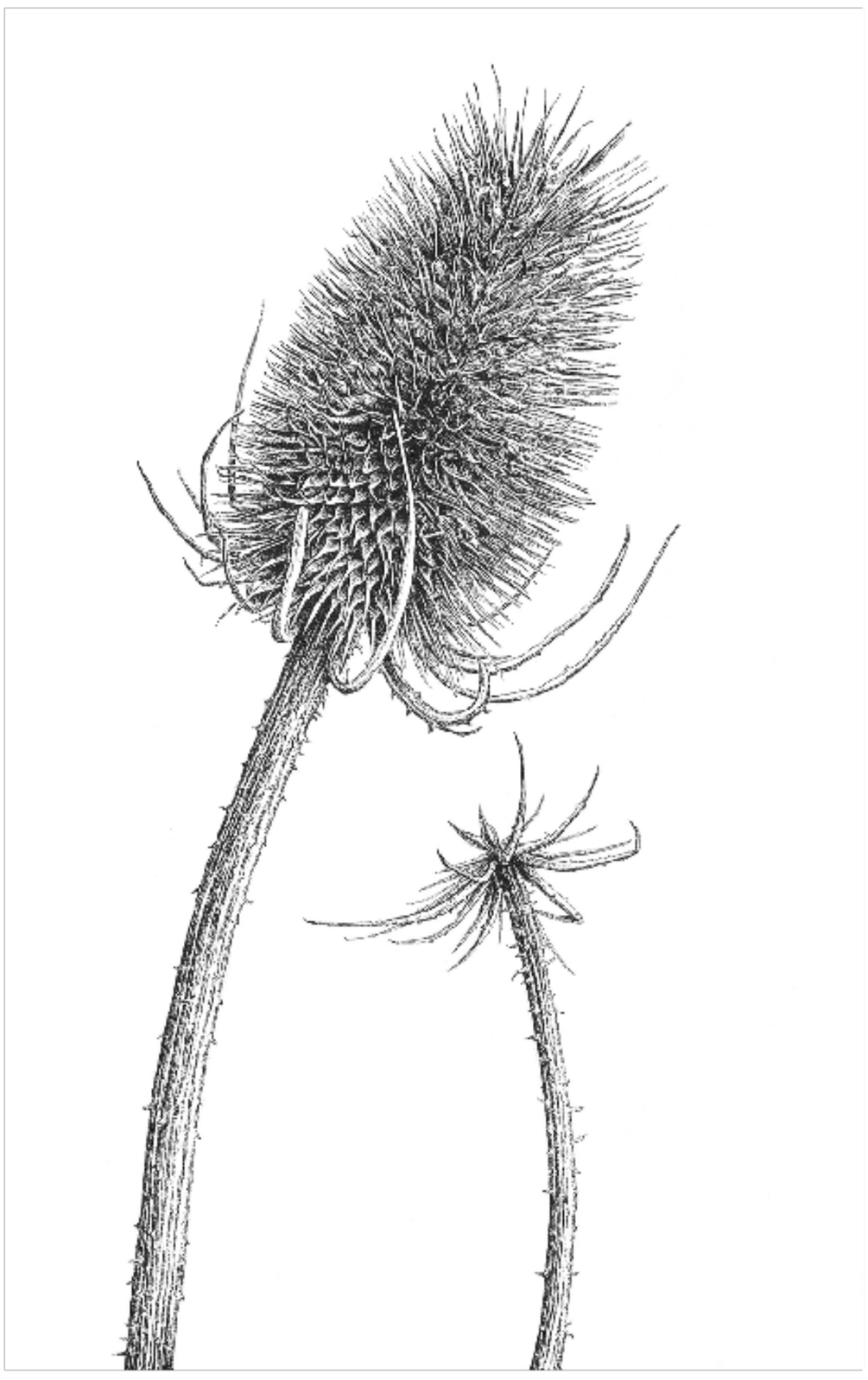
Table of Contents



Write to us!

We are working on making RMN 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 have for you all this time are:

- *With Hurricane Helene in the Southeast, we saw the government abandon people imprisoned in both county jails and state prisons. How have you seen jail and prison administrations here respond to extreme weather events? What, if any, preparations have been made?*
- *How has climate collapse/climate change impacted you during your incarceration? For example, more power outages, more extreme heat or cold?*
- *Have you seen people in prison organize around issues of environmental toxins and access to clean air and water? What would you like to see?*



solution to TIME/cut #14's crossword puzzle

M	A	S	K	■	I	P	A	D	S	■	T	F	A	L
E	L	L	E	■	M	A	R	I	A	■	A	L	S	O
H	E	A	R	T	B	R	E	A	K	■	T	O	T	O
S	E	P	A	R	A	T	E	■	■	A	E	R	I	E
■	■	■	L	O	C	A	L	L	I	B	R	A	R	Y
■	B	L	A	N	K	■	■	E	T	A	T	■	■	■
P	O	X	■	■	■	C	A	T	A	C	O	M	B	S
P	R	I	S	O	N	A	B	O	L	I	T	I	O	N
M	O	V	E	D	I	N	O	N	■	■	■	C	O	O
■	■	■	N	I	N	O	■	■	N	O	A	H	S	■
S	C	O	T	L	A	N	D	Y	A	R	D	■	■	■
T	H	R	E	E	■	■	A	I	R	C	O	O	L	S
R	E	I	N	■	G	A	M	E	W	A	R	D	E	N
I	R	O	C	■	E	B	O	L	A	■	N	O	G	O
P	I	N	E	■	L	E	N	D	L	■	S	M	O	G

Victims of Family Policing Are Leading a Movement to Abolish It

by Carolyn Elerding
from Truthout.org
Oct. 2024

In December 2020, Samantha Hudson arrived with her daughters, ages 2 and 4, at ACCESS Housing family shelter in Adams County, one of the most economically depressed regions in the Denver area. Hudson, who identifies as Native American and has multiple disabilities, hoped staying in the shelter would provide a new beginning and more safety for her girls. What happened next is all too common in marginalized communities throughout the U.S.

Within hours, ACCESS staff called the Child Protective Services (CPS) reporting hotline, and CPS was en route with police to take the children. A couple of weeks later, a petition of drug dependency and neglect was filed against Hudson. It was based on questionable accusations and a past Hudson was working hard to leave behind: substance abuse, intimate partner violence, a minor criminal record and homelessness. Without exploring alternatives, with no drug testing or criminal charges or arrests, and without Spanish-language interpretation for the father, the girls' parents each entered a "no-fault admittance." In doing so, without understanding what they were signing, they surrendered their children to the county court without a jury trial.

As a result, Hudson — who is now forcibly separated from two of her children — may never be able to say to her daughters, "I miss my girls every day of my life," or introduce them to their baby brother. She may never have a chance to explain how hard she tried to protect them from harm and how caseworker bias permanently disrupted their family.

Hudson's story exemplifies the cruel inequalities weaponized in the name of child protection. On multiple occasions, as evidenced by a range of documents, from meeting records to hearing transcripts, an Adams County caseworker with an extensive reputation for harm circulated alarming accusations of drug use while Hudson was fighting for her right to parent her children. Moreover, this occurred after a long series of oversights allegedly committed by that same caseworker, as well as by other human services staff, regarding Hudson's case. By the time the accusations were proven false, it was too late to undo the harm to Hudson's family.

Today, Hudson is part of a growing national movement of prison abolitionists, welfare system professionals, community activists, researchers and affected families working together to challenge the structural oppression enforced by CPS. Family policing systems, these protesters say, are rigged against marginalized people, particularly women of color, with caseworkers wielding vast discretion that is easily abused. As social worker and clinical therapist Martha Wilson points out: "No parent is perfect. Anybody at any moment is capable of doing the wrong thing."

When Help Is Harm

Bias against poor people of color is foundational to child "protection" in the U.S., which law and sociology scholar Dorothy Roberts has called "family policing" and the "foster-industrial complex." This form of institutional violence is rooted in the history of separating enslaved families and forcibly removing Indigenous children to residential schools. Wilson describes children removed from families as becoming "nameless and faceless, traceable only by initials and a case number," hidden behind confidentiality. Meanwhile, families caught up in the system often suffer from attorney negligence and insufficient legal resources.

An abundance of data shows that foster care often increases children's exposure to harm both in and outside of the home, with 50 percent of foster kids experiencing arrest, conviction or detention by age 17. According to research spanning multiple U.S. cities, after five or more placements, 90 percent are embroiled in the criminal legal system. Foster care is a pipeline to the street, with former foster kids making up 50 percent of the U.S. homeless population.

Homelessness is not just an effect of family separation but also a major cause. Hudson has observed firsthand how widespread an issue it is: "You wouldn't believe how many people have kids on the streets right now with them." Many former foster kids lose their own parental rights as adults — and to complicate the matter even more, "parents' rights" are a key issue constantly undergoing redefinition in legislation proposed across the political spectrum. Wilson explains that once CPS is involved, even parents with housing can easily "become unhoused because of all of the requirements. It's very hard for folks to maintain their job, especially if they're court-ordered to go into any kind of rehab. Then there's no one to pay the rent, and they become unhoused. And then that becomes the reason why the kids get can't go home."

Much like police officers, caseworkers hold tremendous power. Once recorded in TRAILS, Colorado's appropriately named social services tracking system, a claim made by a caseworker — even if it is just an assumption rather than a proven truth — is subsequently repeated as fact and, as a result, very difficult to remove. It can be endlessly cut-and-pasted into file after file and then rehashed in court, even if it contains significant errors — like changes from past to present tense, numerous conflicting accounts, or, as in Hudson's case, failure to recognize that a parent's speech is loud because she is hard of hearing.

Yet caseworkers operate relatively free of oversight. From dishonesty during court hearings, to spurious formal complaints stigmatizing colleagues who speak out against injustice, individual abuses of power compound the structural violence. Families in crisis, Wilson explains, meet with constant

skepticism, while “foster families are blessed with the benefit of the doubt.”

Wilson works for the Office of Respondent Parents’ Counsel (ORPC), a Colorado alternative that broadens the range of supportive and therapeutic services available, rather than punitive ones. A parent and lifelong community activist, Wilson worked as a child protection caseworker while training as a therapist: “When I recognized how many children weren’t going back home after they were removed, it felt like too big of a clash with my value system. Everything came to a head shortly after the protests [following the murders of] George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor. I just couldn’t be on the wrong side of this fight anymore.”

“A Social Worker Who Did Not Give Up on Me”

In early 2021, Hudson’s lawyer contacted ORPC, and Wilson was assigned to her case. For weeks, Wilson visited area tent cities, leaving her card and offering cigarettes in hopes of finding Hudson, who had taken to wandering in despair.

When they did connect, it was clear Hudson was struggling with the logistics of her treatment plan — therapy, probation, urine analysis, and more — not to mention the powerful temptation of the drugs ubiquitous in the camps. Navigating complicated bus commutes required several hours daily, and Hudson had to travel with all the possessions she could carry, including her basic survival gear. Arriving 15 minutes late could result in a canceled visitation with her girls. Once, Hudson’s lawyer had to file a motion because Hudson was double-booked, with a treatment and a hearing scheduled for the same time. Hudson also had to make a phone call each morning to learn whether she had a random urine test that day. “I had so much going on that there wasn’t even time for me to stop and be,” she told me.

With Wilson’s support, Hudson persevered. By mid-2021 she was stably housed and soon was consistently testing clean. She also “detoxed” from unhealthy relationship patterns, including with the children’s father, adding domestic violence classes to her treatment routine. A month later, she discovered she was pregnant.

The pregnancy reinforced Hudson’s already impressive commitment to her sobriety, but the Adams County caseworker refused to credit her efforts, instead exaggerating every flaw. “I was assigned to a number of clients who had that particular caseworker,” Wilson said. “I was hearing the same thing over and over again: ‘She doesn’t like me. She doesn’t hear me when I talk. She doesn’t treat me like a human.’ Or ‘she’s lying.’”

In February 2022, Hudson learned the Department of Human Services (DHS) was filing to terminate her parental rights despite her exemplary year and a half of progress. She spiraled into a one-day relapse, which, Wilson argues, DHS should have foreseen and prevented. Understanding that relapse is normal in recovery, Wilson took turns with Hudson’s probation officer providing additional daily support. Hudson recommitted to her treatment and preparing for the baby.

Summer 2022 was a minefield for Hudson. In June, the Adams County caseworker, adding to a large pile of oversights she would later have to answer for in court cross-examination, doubled down on submitting misinformation. She incorrectly stated Hudson was missing urinalysis appointments, though Hudson was 99 percent compliant, having missed one appointment for a termination hearing. She also claimed Hudson tested positive for fentanyl, which Hudson, the testing company, Hudson’s probation officer and the county toxicologist all denied.

On July 12, Hudson gave birth to a healthy baby in neighboring Arapahoe County. Mother and infant tested negative for substances, including a definitive umbilical cord test. Yet while Hudson was in labor, a verbal removal order was made. It required no evidence or investigation, and it was made via an ex parte hearing (meaning neither parent was present nor represented). It stated, based on a “potential danger” noted in Hudson’s record years before, the baby would be placed in foster care at 2 days old.

By law, the ex parte hearing had to be followed up by a full hearing within 72 hours. So, given Hudson’s vast improvements and several glowing letters written by providers including her probation officer, her team remained hopeful, organizing in-home nursing and other daily support. Wilson vacuumed her vehicle to transport Hudson and the baby. But the follow-up hearing was not scheduled until weeks later, due to mishandling of interpretation for the father (in a state where, as of 2022, 11 percent of households reported speaking Spanish at home). It took several months, but finally Hudson and her baby were reunited full time. In summer 2023, as Hudson lost her appeal in Adams County to parent her girls, she was awarded custody of her baby in Arapahoe County and declared a fit parent, case dismissed.

Looking back over these past few years, Hudson and her supporters say it feels like an attempt was made to crush her. If one or both of these parents had been unambiguously white with stable housing, would there have been false reports of drug use? Why didn’t the negative result from the umbilical cord drug test make a difference? Why were so many mistakes made with Hudson’s case? How did the same facts lead to such different outcomes by county?

Despite these indignities, Hudson is persisting with intense courage and determination. Hudson has been recommended to join a parent advocacy team, and she is participating in a class-action lawsuit and has mobilized a complaint to the Office for Civil Rights. She has testified in the state capitol in support of bills that have since been signed into law, including one that protects low-income tenants by requiring mediation before eviction. Two years sober as of February 5, 2024, Hudson says that, due to her experiences with CPS, “I’m traumatized every

"Reading List"

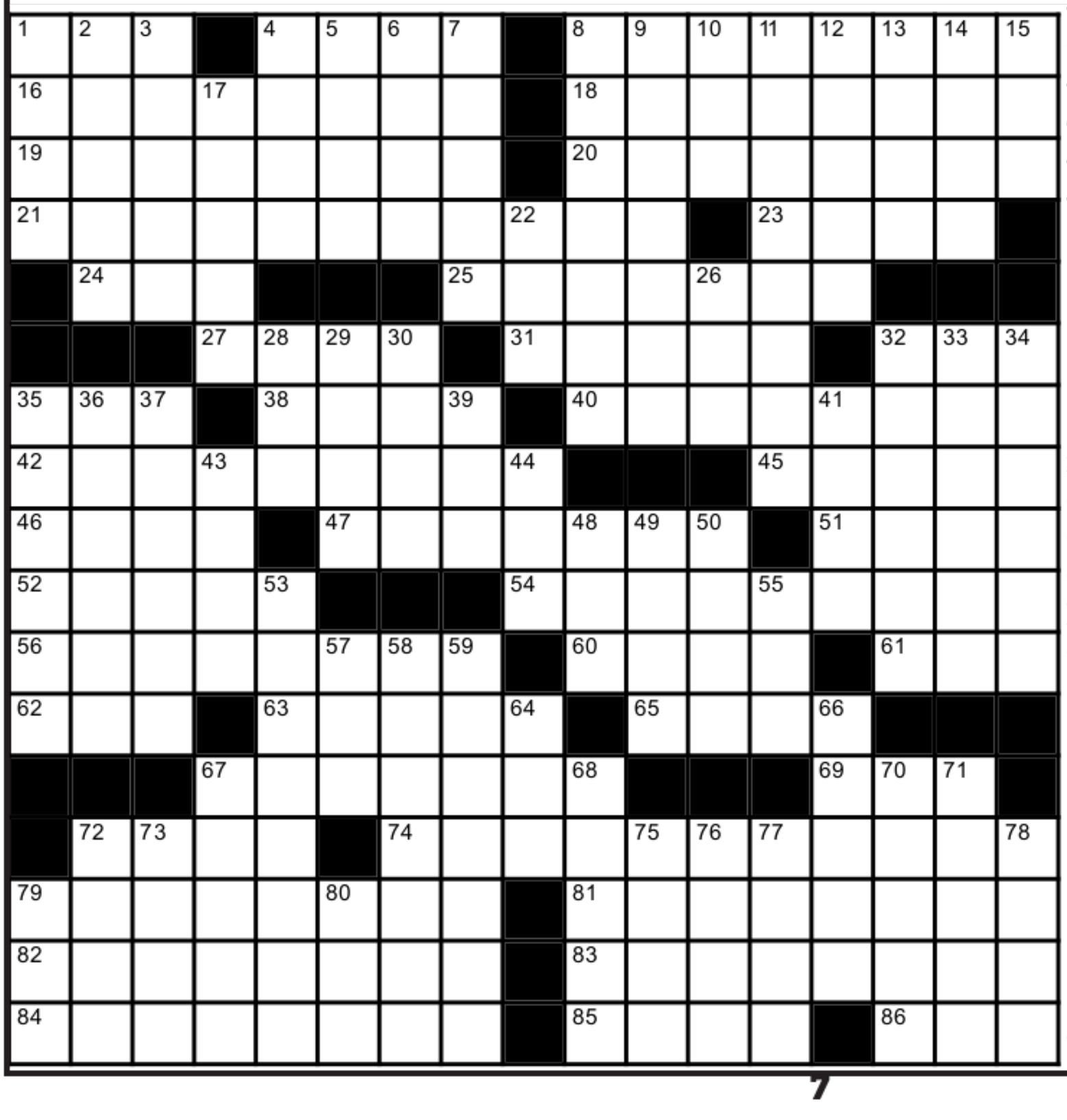
Leonard Williams

Across

1.Sorento maker
4."Highway to Hell" band
8.With 21-Across, Piper Kerman memoir
16.Small talk
18.In a ceremonial way
19.Around midnight, say
20.Greek hero in the Trojan War
21.See 8-Across
23.Baltic and Bering
24.Sites for surgeries: Abbr.
25.Cooler brand
27.Mongol dwelling
31.Admit
32.___ de los Muertos
35.Pin money source?
38.Apple's auotmated assistant
40.Making data accessible across devices (var.)
42.Eldridge Cleaver's memoir
45.Country rocker Steve
46.National instrument of Japan
47.Tries to achieve, as a goal
51.Gradually remove (from)
52.Takes aback
54.Genre for "A Place to Stand" by Jimmy Santiago Baca
56.With 74-Across, noted work by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
60.Thomas Edison's middle name
61.Rushing stat
62.Popeye's Olive ___
63.Maker of gel pens
65.Important numbers for sunbathers: Abbr.
67.Drink or clothing sizes
69.Nonhuman primate
72."___ she blows!" (whaler's phrase)
74.See 56-Across
79.Short stature caused by genetic mutation
81.Famous Edward Hopper painting (1926)
82.Polite way to say FAFO
83.Site for a weekend cottage
84.Ta-Nehisi Coates, at times
85.Caustic cleaners
86.Grp. known for "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes"

Down

1.Traditional tartan garment
2.Mountain state with a panhandle
3.Take in or let out, as a garment
4.Feel one's pain
5.Grub
6.Smear on
7.Copy (keyboard macro)
8.Prophets
9.Like an abandoned Victorian house, esp. in horror films
10.Airport code for Eleftherios Venizelos International
11.Pest
12.Ancient Greek physisican
13.Scat queen Fitzgerald
14.Martinique et Réunion
15.Part of CBS: Abbr.
17.Quite small, informally
22.Co. once known for its instant messaging service
26.Part of an hr.
28.Grp. that serves military personnel
29.Site for sumo
30.Run-DMC, for example
32.With desperate urgency
33.Like tiles in a mosaic
34.Some IRS personnel
35.Invites
36.Like certain grins or smiles
37.Pari-___ (type of betting)
39.Cooler contents
41.Goldie, star of "Private Benjamin" (1980)
43.Like some wait times
44.Psychic ability, for short
48.Italian title for a monk
49.Canola and olive, e.g.
50.Abbr. on an invitation
53.1972 blaxploitation film remade in 2018
55.Clod
57.Often misplaced Tupperware item
58.Pseudonyms
59.Style of cooking, or one who appreciates it
64.Pay TV network for films
66.Retail
67.Trump spouse between Ivana and Melania
68.Eponymous logo for a gas station
70.___ room (emergency shelter)
71.Old fashioned interjection
72.Pairs
73.Dwelling in Germany
75."As ___ Dying" (Faulkner work)
76.Small dog breed, familiarly
77.Nights before big days
78.Bad sign
79.Henna, for example
80.It ___ (formal reply to "Who's there?")



day of my life.”

The Movement to Transform CPS

At 8:30 am on a weekday in late 2023, activists filled a Jefferson County, Colorado, courtroom. The protest was one in a series of marches, media appearances, and other actions in support of a parent, Anna, who had not seen her child for almost 1,000 days, instead experiencing countless instances of mishandling and injustice. Like Hudson, Anna has joined in organized political resistance and mutual aid.

The action was organized by the Colorado-based MJCF Coalition, a community organization gaining traction nationally. Members include social workers and therapists like Wilson, as well as parents like Anna and Hudson who have lost children. They speak out against inequities faced by poor BIPOC families at the hands of caseworkers, judges, guardians ad litem (state-appointed child advocates), service providers and even their own attorneys.

MJCF was founded by consultant Maleeka Jihad, who experienced foster care herself — due not to abuse but to poverty, as is most often the case. Every year, she and her family celebrate the anniversary of their reunification, the all too rare best-case scenario.

MJCF provides volunteer-run grassroots resources for networking, healing, advocacy and political strategy. In addition to speaking at legislative sessions and offering community resources, MJCF holds an annual protest to abolish child welfare, during which, in addition to marching and sharing stories and speeches, they feed homeless people.

Wilson explains, “We’re losing a lot of parents to suicide and overdose.… Keeping parents alive is really important to us, keeping them ready and prepared for when their kids come looking, because they always do.”

Abolitionists, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Angela Y. Davis and Mariame Kaba, have long argued that tearing down harmful institutions, or parts of them, is only one side of a multifaceted grassroots process of creating new institutions grounded in safer, healthier, more equitable communities.

Abolitionist organizations throughout the U.S. have different focuses, ranging from harm-reducing reforms for the near term, to permanent abolitionist alternatives. Some raise awareness through media engagement, as Rise magazine does by publishing parents’ stories. Others, like the UpEND Movement and Think of Us, conduct research, redesign existing systems such as youth housing, and mobilize technology to develop alternatives like online community support resources. Many, like JMACforFamilies, engage in parent-led activism by addressing legislative bodies and holding protests.

In 2024, Movement for Family Power has launched a national platform to link organizations devoted to catalyzing mutual aid and abolishing the family regulation system, offering a resource library, a Movement Map activists can add their group to, and holding events online and in person.

Key to abolition is the creation of networks of mutual aid, building community through events and shared resources. MJCF, for example, holds grief therapy groups led by a licensed counselor for parents who have lost parental rights.

During COVID-19 lockdowns, when many child welfare services were paused, poor communities of color throughout the U.S. successfully organized to help one another, giving a glimpse of the better world envisioned by abolitionists in action. In New York City, dozens of mutual aid organizations such as Bed-Stuy Strong and Bronx Mutual Aid Network, some newly formed and others repurposed from existing networks, enabled communities to secure food, child care, mental health support, and more.

Although it was widely predicted that children would suffer more harm without mandatory reporters like teachers watching them, the factual evidence, as shown by the research of Anna Arons, tells an opposite story: Children are safer without the so-called child welfare system. In New York City during spring 2020, as shown by Arons, there was no increase in child abuse and far fewer families were separated, and the numbers did not rise again when services became available. As Roberts says, “We can confidently hope for a society that has no need for family policing, because we are already creating it.”

Prisons Crush Almost All LGBTQ+ Organizing. Our Community Survives.

by Tavaria Merritt
from FilterMag.org
Sept. 2024

My name is Tavaria, but people call me Varia, T, Mama T or Queen. Ten years ago, I founded Be the Change LGBTQ+ Community. We are the only openly LGBTQ+ community in the Tennessee state prison system.

Right now we have around 30 members, most of us being incarcerated at South Central Correctional Facility, a men’s prison in Tennessee that’s privately operated by CoreCivic. Before BTC, the LGBTQ+ people here were scared to walk the compound. When gangs are in power, vulnerable prisoners are extorted and assaulted every day. That no longer happens.

There are a lot of LGBTQ+ people behind bars in the United States, especially transgender women like myself. One reason you may not have heard of a group like ours before is that prison administrators have a way of shutting down any peer-led organizing, by labeling you STG—security threat group,

meaning gang-affiliated. Even just a couple of people standing together and talking can be taken as evidence of gang-related activity. Early on, there were some threats to label us an STG. But there are certain criteria a group has to meet in order to be classified STG. They know the gay flag isn't gang colors.

I have no gang affiliations, but the affiliated people here have come to respect me as a leader and they know everyone BTC is to be left alone. If they're not sure whether someone's one of mine, they'll find out. When we need to negotiate for our interests, I have a seat at the table. The last time I remember us having a problem with anyone gang-affiliated was maybe a year and a half ago, when a fan was stolen. I went into their unit and said there's property here that belongs to one of mine, and if someone steals from one of mine they steal from me. The fan was returned.

When a new officer is starting the job, an officer who's been here longer will say, Hey, this is Varia. If there's a problem with anyone LGBTQ+, she's who you talk to.

It's extremely rare that any BTC member is given a problem, but if it happens I make sure it's addressed. I remember one incident several ago when I was called down to see a community member who turned out to be sitting inside his cell and I couldn't get the door open. Come to find he'd tied a string to the handle and tied the other end to his bunk. When I finally got in he said, Mama T that string is to keep me safe. They have robbed me, they have beat me. They have done everything.

I went to administration and said, I got one of mine down there who's been assaulted. He needs to be moved to a different area immediately. And because the staff here respect me, he was moved.

I help staff make cell assignments so LGBTQ+ people here don't end up with a cellie who'll cause a problem. Sometimes they'll bring me to people who just got off the transfer bus. In 2023 they invited me to a training for new officers, when they're supposed to learn about the policies for the LGBTQ+ people here, like how people with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria like myself are not supposed to get pat-searched by the male officers, or are on a list to shower at certain times.

Almost every time a new officer is starting the job, an officer who's been here longer will introduce us and say, Hey, this is Varia. If there's a problem with anyone LGBTQ+, she's who you talk to.

Like in any other community, not every BTC member is perfectly behaved. I got my "rough kids." And when a staff member comes to me saying, One of yours got smart with me today, I'll go and correct my people. BTC has laws that we all agree to abide by, one of which is we don't disrespect ourselves, staff or anyone else.

If a BTC member is in medical and doesn't want to talk to staff, I get called down. Two or three times staff have even called me down to see someone on suicide watch who won't eat. But I talk with them, and they eat. It's that community bond they need to keep going.

Staff is apparently claiming that I said as a transgender woman I did not feel safe going to that unit. This is a lie.

Up until late July, most current BTC members including myself were living in the same pod. Then with almost no warning, everyone in the pod except me was suddenly relocated to a different unit down the hill from the rest of the compound, with a pod known for being gang-affiliated. Since then, the community has faced physical attacks. Meanwhile I've been in a unit where I'm the only person identifying as LGBTQ+.

Staff is apparently claiming that I said as a transgender woman I did not feel comfortable being housed down the hill. This is a lie. First of all, nobody wanted to go down there but I'm a leader and I would not leave my people like that. Second, why would I feel safer in a unit where I'm alone, instead of where I'd have 15 or 20 people to have my back? I've filed grievances and written in-house letters to the warden describing how I do not feel safe where I am currently. CoreCivic and South Central Warden Grady Perry did not respond to a Filter editor's request for comment.

In 13-plus years incarcerated I have never requested to see someone in mental health, but since being separated from BTC I have gone and seen mental health two or three times. And I told them, I have to stay strong for my community but I am going through some depression right now. I feel vulnerable. I have nobody to talk to. And I know my people are suffering, too.

Most days I'm advocating for my community rather than myself. But I definitely advocate for myself. I've probably filed at least 20 grievances over the years based on violations of my rights as a trans woman. I've filed grievances about being pat-searched by male officers, or strip-searched in full view of others. I've filed grievances on staff who don't follow the policy allowing those of us on the list to shower when the rest of the unit is in their cells, so we don't get assaulted or pushed out of the shower or taxed by gang members.

However, the majority of staff here like me and are supportive of BTC, and don't treat me as if accommodating my rights is extra work. Because if it wasn't for me, their job would involve a lot more cell reassignments. A lot more people checking into protective custody because they got assaulted or got into debt. A lot more paperwork that I know staff does not want to do. And I'm still getting called down the hill to help sort out problems.

Maybe this isn't just about punishing me, but about weakening BTC by separating it from its leader.

Multiple members of administration, including the warden, have said they have no problem moving me. The unit manager down with the rest of the pod is supportive. I'm seeing other people around the facility put in for cell transfers and get moved with no problem. But I'm still here. When my first grievance was denied they wouldn't tell me why, other than to say it was not discriminatory based on me being transgender.

More recently I was told that me being housed here was due to PREA reasons or security reasons. The Prison Rape Elimination Act would support them overruling my housing preference if I had ever been assaulted or had a problem with anyone in the new unit. But there is nothing on my file to even suggest that anything would be a PREA issue, other than the fact of me being transgender.

There aren't many people here openly identifying as trans, but I'm not the only one. Just the only one being treated differently right now. I've never experienced prejudice or retaliation anywhere near this level before. Maybe administration isn't doing this just to punish me personally, but because they saw opportunity to weaken the community by separating the leader.

There are 14 state prisons in Tennessee, and I get letters from people in seven or eight of them asking about BTC and saying how inspired they are, that they had no idea a community like this could exist. The longer that prisons, especially private prisons like this one, can keep us divided, the longer they can get away with finding new ways to cut costs, putting our lives in jeopardy, and not treating us all equally. They don't want incarcerated communities. They want incarcerated individuals.

The Crucible of Radical Prison Struggle
by TIME/cut *editorial staff*

I recently started reading Orisanmi Burton's *Tip of the Spear* & a zine about the history of the Palestinian prisoner's movement. Burton is doing a historical deep dive and deep analysis of Black-led prisoner rebellion, largely in the late 60's and early 70s. What he calls "Long Attica," as in the Attica Rebellion, was more than one moment in time, but that those 5 days in September of 1971 were merely the apex of something longer and larger. Something fundamental about both of these histories (of Palestinian prisoners and Black prisoners in the Civil Rights era) that stands out to me is how prisoner resistance and prisoner liberation is not only inseparable from, but an essential part of, a people's larger liberation struggle. This has also been true for anarchist struggles. Whether because of identity, colonial relationship, or ideology, some people will always end up facing repression, criminalization, and incarceration so long as the oppressors are in power.

In anarchist world, we have a refrain that being imprisoned doesn't take one out of the fight, it just changes the terrain. From the Palestinian Prisoners Movement zine: " Many Palestinian political prisoners and former prisoners view the national liberation movement and the prisoners movement as one and the same, and in each iteration...demonstrates the essentially carceral nature of the national liberation movement, both in the sense of the universality of imprisonment as a weapon of warfare and occupation and also – since wherever there is occupation there is rebellion – in that even the most brutal forms of imprisonment can themselves become school of revolt." From *Tip of the Spear*: "Thus, we see that it was not only the rebels but also the state that understood this era of carceral struggle as being about much more than prison conditions and prison reform. Although they erupted within prisons, these rebellions looked beyond them." In this article, I will explore what implications this understanding has for both imprisoned and "free world" rebels and organizers. And, it should be noted, this dynamic of prison struggle being part and parcel of a larger movement, exists for many groups of People, beyond Palestinian, anarchist, and Black people in the U.S. This is true for Indigenous people in the so-called U.S. and elsewhere; immigrants communities, and even trans and queer people who are criminalized. And, of course, many people are part of more than one of these groups. What would it change for carceral struggle to be more widely understood in these terms? Where and to what extent is it already that we can build off of? I will mostly be speaking about the U.S. context here, but use the example of Palestinian Prisoners Movement as something we can learn from, and also support, as all struggles against colonization are connected.

People who see themselves as participants in liberation movements but not currently incarcerated, can help to shift the larger space of prisoner support, advocacy, abolition, and/or reform by speaking and operating from this framework: that prison struggle is part of something larger and prison rebels are innovative actors in collective liberation. This certainly doesn't apply to all prisoners; some are reactionary. But it applies to far more than just the "political" prisoners or people locked up for explicitly revolutionary acts. We can adjust the language we use. As some people already do, identifying "prisoners of war" positions them in a different antagonism to the U.S. than they commonly are given. We should integrate, as much as possible, imprisoned comrades into outside activities, as a way to refuse the isolation and separation, physically, socially, and politically. Outside people can offer this understanding to rebels and activists inside and can encourage other outside supporters to see beyond the reform of conditions.

This brings me to an idea from insurrectionary anarchism that helps us understand how these two things can coexist. We can mobilize around specific and limited material demands, but also always be looking beyond that, toward the extension and expansion of struggle for total liberation. And that longer view changes the way we do the specific, limited issues. For example, we choose not to compromise with elites and those in power, even if it would, ostensibly, meet a few demands or get a few

Cooking in Lock-Up

Ramen Tamale

Recipe from "Prison Ramen" cookbook for prisoners

Ingredients

2 packs beef flavored ramen
1 bag (about 4 ounces) spicy pork skins or rinds
½ cup refried beans
2 bags (if 1-2 ounces each) corn chips
1 ½ cups boiling water
3 tablespoons squeezable cheese, or more to taste

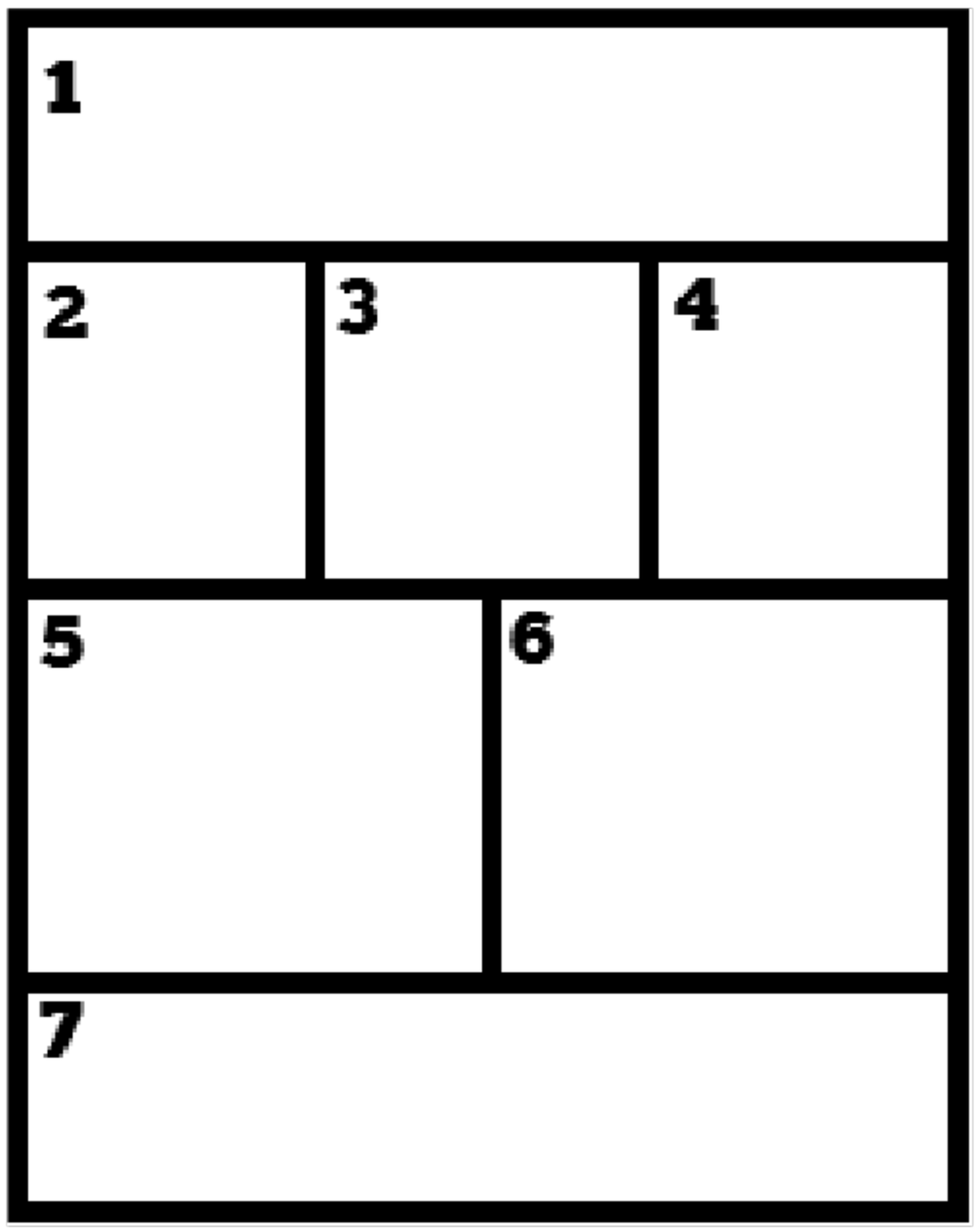
Instructions

1. Crush the ramen in the wrappers, then open wrappers.
2. Set aside one seasoning packet, and save the other for another use.
3. Crush the pork skins in the closed bag.
4. Open one end of the bag and add ramen, refried beans, corn chips, seasoning, and water. Mix well.
5. Fold the bag in half to secure the tamale. Wrap a towel around the bag to keep heat in.
6. Let sit for 30 minutes.
7. Remove from bag, spread cheese on top. Enjoy!

Caring For Mental Health

Art Journaling for Winter

adapted from Nicole J Georges



For this exercise, you need two sheets of paper and something to draw with. Divide the first piece of paper into boxes as shown above, and then in each box, follow these prompts:

1) draw a whale and an ocean
2) draw or write what you can see right now (in real life/around you)
3) draw/write what you can hear
4) draw/write what you can smell or taste or touch
5) draw a self portrait. how are you feeling right now? show it.
6) draw a circle. on the outside, draw/write what is out of your control today. on the inside, draw/write what is in your control today.
7) what do you appreciate? draw or write it here

On the second piece of paper, draw yourself being held by a giant creature. Add a background to your drawing—you are somewhere safe and calm. Add a speech bubble. Let this creature tell you one thing you need to hear as you move into this new season and new year. This creature wants what is best for you.

concessions is in our best interest. We refuse to be pacified by empty gestures, co-opted into the halls of power, or be reduced to something legible and "rationale." We treat and empower each other in such a way that we can continue to build power together. The idea of an intermediary struggle is that a certain issue or demand is a vehicle for both confronting power and growing ourselves into individuals committed to and capable of autonomy. It also implies an immediacy; not every moment is the right moment to act, but if we're waiting for the perfect moment, it never comes. Sometimes starting without them is the best way to get more people on board. What can we do with what we have, now? It's not that the specific demand that doesn't matter, but that we will not sell out larger goals and principles for them to be met. In Tip of the Spear, Burton argues that this is essentially what the Attica rebels were doing. They are fighting for better conditions, but they were also fighting for something more profound. Their actions were not just directed at the administration that could meet their demands, but also at the hearts of other rebels, both inside and out. Burton's analysis of the true desires of Attica rebels comes from archives and extensive interviews with those involved.

I wonder if incarcerated rebels easily see themselves in this framework? I have heard that inside (as mirrors the outside), social solidarity is less prevalent than it once was. And I certainly have seen (from both prisoners and their loved ones/ advocates in the "free world") protests or appeals for better conditions that are done in a way that only strengthen the power of the state/the oppressors. But I also know that there are powerful and beautiful lineages of Black revolutionary thought and practice in Indiana prisoners, connecting 70's era radicals to today's. I also know that the state is purposefully, on multiple fronts, disrupting these lineages by transferring people out of state, putting them into solitary, sometimes even killing them. In fact, in the wake of Attica and other acts of revolt, the U.S. began a program called the Prison Activist Surveillance Program (PRIS-ACTS) that was like COINTELRPO, but for imprisoned (mostly) Black radicals. [Perhaps we'll have more on this in a future issue.] If the government (our enemies) see prison struggle and larger liberation movements as integral to each other, shouldn't we?

The last point I want to explore is the idea that incarceration can serve a crucible for radicalization. As the Palestinian Prisoners Movement puts it: "forms of imprisonment can themselves be school of revolt." Burton quotes infamous FBI director J. Edgar Hoover: "[B]lack extremists in our penal institutions are increasingly responsible for fomenting discord within the penal system including extortion, blackmail, rioting, and the holding of hostages in furtherance of their revolutionary aims." The state should be afraid to put anarchists, afraid to put Black radicals, afraid to put Indigenous warriors in prison because of what they might foment, who they might reach, and what they might build. Again, the lineage of Black revolutionaries in Indiana prisons proves this point. So, on the one hand, the imprisonment of radicals takes the fight to that terrain and threatens the state's power where their grip is the tightest. And, on the other hand, prison revolt creates revolutionaries that speak to each other, and to people outside. Through the process of rebellion, like that of intermediary struggle, we re-create and co-create ourselves and each other. That is one of their essential purposes, as much getting any demands met. To quote Tip of the Spear one more time:

"Attica rebels...not only imagined and dreamed a world without prisons, but put their bodies and lives on the line to materialize their vision in the face of determined opposition. The shape of the world they began to build in place of what they began to tear down was not predetermined. Rather, it was improvised through the unfolding of the Revolt, a collective movement toward freedom. Theirs was a freedom that was not only material and political, but cognitive and metaphysical, a freedom nurtured within and between people who came to understand themselves as new kinds of beings for a new kind of world, a freedom that could not be granted, that could only be seized."

Let's make this a conversation. Write to us: what do you make of this framework? Is this something you already understood? How would you adapt it? What potential does it hold? What would acting from this framework look like? Where and how is this already happening that we could build on?

An Open Letter to Prison Officials on the Censorship of "Tip of the Spear"
by Orisanmi Burton
from PublicBooks.org
Nov. 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

The purpose of this letter is to address the intensifying effort on the part of prison officials to prevent incarcerated people from reading my book—*Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression, and the Long Attica Revolt* (The University of California Press, 2023). The book is currently banned from prisons in several states, including New York, Florida, Michigan, and California, where it was "placed on the Centralized List of Disapproved Publications" and is now considered "Contraband," meaning imprisoned people found with it in their possession can be punished. Decisions such as these are why prisons have been deemed the most restrictive reading environments in the United States.

Tip of the Spear is a work of historical ethnography that builds on over a decade of painstaking research. Its primary argument is that prisons in the United States are best understood as technologies of domestic warfare masquerading as apolitical instruments of crime control. The book demonstrates that in response to the urban rebellions of the 1960s and the growth

of antiracist, anticolonial, anticapitalist organizations like the Black Panther Party, state actors at various levels of government weaponized prisons as part of a broader counterinsurgency against the possibility of radical social transformation within and beyond the United States. It shows that rather than debilitating these movements, as the state had expected, the resulting increase of politically active prisoners precipitated new movements that evolved behind prison walls. It is in the praxis of this imprisoned struggle that the roots of contemporary prison abolition politics are to be found. Conversely, it is in the state's attempt to transform the prison into an instrument capable of crushing this movement and destroying this knowledge that a key impetus for massive growth of the prison system after 1970 can be found.

The primary setting for the book is the New York State Prison system during the 1970s which allowed me to offer a radical re-narration and retheorization of the well-known, but poorly understood, Attica prison rebellion of 1971. While Attica is typically framed as a four-day rebellion by incarcerated people for improved prison conditions, I stretch the temporality and geography of the rebellion and recover its revolutionary, anticolonial, and abolitionist dimensions. I also show how in order to neutralize this incarcerated prison movement, prison administrators, or what I call "prisoncrats," integrated colonial theories of counterinsurgency into the normalized routines of prison management. In doing so, I show that a primary driver of prison expansion, reform, and innovation and thus a primary driver of US historical and political development is an anti-Black and antiradical imperative.

I reject the notion that my book "advocates … lawlessness, violence, anarchy, or rebellion against governmental authority," or that it "incite[s] disobedience," as was claimed in a memo from New York prison officials who rejected the book from Mohawk Correctional Facility. A close reading of Tip of the Spear will reveal that it advocates only that people think in radically different ways about the historical role of prisons in US society. It is deeply revealing, however, that you so readily confuse advocacy of unorthodox forms of thought with the promotion of violence, for it lays bare the totalitarian impulse at the core of your enterprise.

What disturbs you is not the book's alleged advocacy of violence as such, but how it explicates the primary source from which the vast majority of prison-based violence flows: the state. The prisoner-led rebellions of the 1970s that you interpret as "violence" erupted within a pervasive atmosphere of racist and political repression, systematic dehumanization, psychological warfare, sexualized terror, and medicalized torture carried out by a broad network of state actors who were operating with near total impunity. This is attested to by copious and well-cited evidence. I invite you to engage my sources, and as you do, to think about why only certain forms of harm are coded as violence.

While it does not advocate rebellion, Tip of the Spear refuses to denounce, condemn, and pathologize the imprisoned Black militants of the 1970s, many of whom at various moments not only advocated but actively engaged in "lawlessness," "violence," "anarchy," and "rebellion against governmental authority." This too is the source of your dismay. Against the tendency to flatten and pathologize prison rebels as manic "extremists," I narrate them as highly intelligent and rational beings who were thinking strategically about the role of violence, not only in the maintenance of their subjugation, but also in their collective political struggle within and against one of the most repressive institutions of the racist capitalist state.

What you call "violence," I call "counterviolence": a countervailing force exerted by people whose only other option was to allow themselves to be abused and destroyed with little to no opposition from communities beyond the walls. As jailhouse lawyer Martin Sostre wrote in a law review article from 1972, "The Attica Rebellion was the result of recognition, after decades of painful exhaustion of all peaceful means of obtaining redress, of the impossibility of obtaining justice within the 'legal' framework of an oppressive racist society which was founded on the most heinous injustices: murder, robbery, slavery."

In line with Sostre's productive rethinking of justice, I cannot help but reflect on the irony of the fact that your charge that Tip of the Spear advocates violence emanates from a site of institutionalized violence named after a Native American tribe whose land was stolen by the US government and whose members are the historical victims of the state-orchestrated crime of genocide. The counterviolence of oppressed people is quantitatively and qualitatively different from the violence prisons perpetuate. As historian Walter Rodney explains, "Violence aimed at the recovery of human dignity and at equality cannot be judged by the same yardstick as violence aimed at maintenance of discrimination and oppression."

I was much more impressed by what Florida prison officials had to say when they rejected my book. In capital letters, they wrote: "BOOK DEPICTS PRISON AS A RACIST INSTITUTION DESIGNED TO REPRESS BLACK COMMUNITIES AND VOICES." Arguing this point was indeed one of the major tasks of my book. I marshaled a considerable amount of archival research to demonstrate that in 1971, in the wake of a massive rebellion at Attica Prison and the state administered massacre that followed, prisons began to integrate international techniques of counterinsurgency warfare into their normal operation. As Florida officials seem to have recognized, not only do these techniques target Black populations (communities), they also aim to eradicate Black radical theories, narratives, and ideas (voices). Your censorship of my book attests to the ongoingness of these historical imperatives.

The above acknowledgement notwithstanding, I take exception to the second and final sentence of the Florida official's

explanation: “MAY LEAD TO RIOTS OR INSURECTION [sic] WITHIN THE PRISON.” This claim is consistent with a centuries long tradition whereby those who enforce systems of domination attribute discontent, protest, and rebellion to “outside agitators.” Just as plantation owners of the 18th century employed this discourse to explain slave rebellions, and segregationists employed it to explain Civil Rights and Black Power mobilization, prison officials employ it to explain prison resistance movements. For example, during Vincent R. Mancusi’s 1971 testimony regarding Attica, the beleaguered warden attributed the rebellion’s cause, in part, to “radical literature and propaganda.” Building on similar “evidence” two years later, Missouri Congressman Richard H. Ichord bemoaned before an audience at a conference of the conservative Daughters of the American Revolution, that “revolutionary literature is flooding prisons today [and] … possibly as a consequence, prison violence is accelerating at an alarming rate.” Note the mental gymnastics needed to celebrate the so-called revolution of American slave owners against the British Crown while simultaneously demonizing the Black antislavery revolution in America.

otably, Congressman Ichord was then acting as chairman of the House Internal Security Committee—which had recently changed its name from the House Un-American Activities Committee—the Cold War institution that infamously criminalized and harassed countless people accused of harboring communist sympathies. By recycling the well-worn “outside agitator” trope, you reveal the prison’s role in reproducing anti-Black racism and antiradical hysteria, mutually reinforcing ideologies that that constitute what Dr. Charisse Burden-Stelley terms “The Black Scare/Red Scare.”9Furthermore, your rationalization for censoring my book is a facile attempt to abdicate your responsibility for creating environments conducive to rebellion, and to obscure the fact that oppressed people have the capacity to comprehend and develop effective responses to their own oppression. So said Richard X. Clark, an elected spokesmen of the Attica rebels, who challenged Mancusi and Ichord’s assertions, proclaiming, “I’ll tell you what caused the riot at Attica: Attica … The conditions that existed there made it inevitable.”

Your censorship of my book must be understood within the broader context of an intensifying US-based propaganda war that is aggressively silencing critical, internationalist, and anti-imperialist perspectives. Examples include but are not limited to: the brutal, nation-wide repression of pro-Palestinian voices and activism; the various school and library book bans and curriculum restrictions enacted as part of the coordinated right-wing attack on so-called critical race theory; the suppression, demonetization, and banning of left voices from YouTube, Meta, and other social media platforms; the persecution of the “Uhuru 3”—Florida-based activists whose organizing for Black self-determination was smeared with the false charge that they were acting as “foreign agents.”

Many frame these curtailments to free speech as a threat to democracy and as evidence of rising authoritarianism that could, at some future moment, take hold in the United States. In contrast to this view, imprisoned Black radical intellectuals like George L. Jackson have long argued that “fascism is already here.” Jackson and others did not see the prison-based rituals of censorship, violence, exploitation, and white supremacy as exceptions to the norms of liberal democracy. Rather, they saw them as a distillation, the very essence of society that was founded on genocide and slavery and that continues to be ruled by monopoly capital. Under such conditions, elite control over the flow of knowledge is imperative. “The [modus operandi] of the fascist arrangement is always to protect the capitalist class by destroying the consciousness, the trust, the unity of the lower classes,” Jackson wrote in Soledad Brother, which is also considered contraband in prisons throughout the United States. You honor me by placing my book in such esteemed company.

The real issue is not that my book may incite riots, but that your hold on power is so fragile, so tenuous, so devoid of legitimacy that mere words on a page may be enough to make your cages of concrete and steel go up in flames. Given this reality, you are right to censor my book. But I want to let you in on something. The thesis of Tip of the Spear was not invented in a library. To the contrary, it was developed through archival and oral history methods that center the consciousness of imprisoned Black revolutionaries like Martin Sostre, George Jackson, the Attica Brothers, and many others. The text is an act of radical recovery that stitches together previously discredited and imprisoned formations of knowledge and reads them against official narratives.

This means that while most of the people in your cages may not be privy to all of the history the book lays out, they will certainly be familiar with the notion that prisons are a domain of war because this is something I learned from them. Incarcerated people did not need to read Tip of the Spear in 2016 or 2018, when they collectively challenged governmental authority by organizing National Strikes to coincide with the anniversaries of George Jackson’s August 21, 1971, assassination by California prison authorities and the Attica rebellion three weeks later. Your efforts at censorship are futile because they both misrecognize the source of the knowledge contained in the Tip of the Spear and overestimate your capacity to effectively control ideas and behavior. As political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal explains, “A people can never acquiesce to the state’s imposition of mental contraband.”

In fierce opposition,
Orisanmi Burton

Hands Off Samidoun: Solidarity with the Palestinian Prisoner Support Network

by Philadephia Anarchist Black Cross
from PhillyABC.org
Oct. 2024

Philly ABC extends our solidarity to Samidoun, the Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, in response to the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) falsely-premised sanctions against the organization announced on October 15th. As anarchists and abolitionists attuned to organizing against prisons and policing, we recognize this as the latest attempt to employ the tactic of fabrication to repress powerful social movements. Samidoun affirmed their commitment to remain steadfast in the struggle to free Palestinians from the atrocities of colonization and state-sponsored fascism:

> As Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, we reiterate our support for the Palestinian people, the prisoners and the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic resistance, who are confronting the genocide and occupation on a daily basis. … Our response to this designation is clear: we will keep struggling to stop the genocide, stop imperialist support for Israel, until the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea. … The repression is a sign of strength for the Palestinian movement and the international solidarity movement. This movement has mobilized the largest demonstrations for Palestine in history, has costed Israeli and Zionist companies billions of dollars in losses, it has united millions of people from across the world, and it has united virtually all social movements in every country for the Palestinian liberation struggle. …We affirm that we shall remain steadfast and committed to the Palestinian people, until victory, return and liberation.

We concur that this repression is a sign of strength. It's a clear reaction to the surge of global support for resistance movements and efforts to confront Israel's blatant fascism, in which both the U.S. and Canadian governments are complicit. It's the type of flailing they do when shit is getting hot; when solidarity is getting real.

In light of their fascist agenda in Palestine, in response to international calls for solidarity, around 400 of us came together in Philly (and remotely) on the 25th anniversary of #RunningDownTheWalls to support mutual aid in Gaza. Not only does Gaza qualify as the world's largest open air prison, but every Palestinian held by the Zionist entity can be considered an anti-colonial political prisoner. It was the biggest crowd in the history of RDTW. A comrade from Samidoun spoke about the importance of amplifying the voices of Palestinian prisoners, to bolster our collective movements for their freedom as well as liberation more broadly. Just as we support Indigenous and Black liberation movements on Turtle Island and recognize captured combatants as prisoners of war, Palestinians have every right to fight for self-determination.

While hundreds of thousands across the globe continue to mobilize to stop the genocide of Palestinians—and continue to take action day after day to confront imperialist complicity in fascism and colonization—our enemies are deploying their bookies to collect on lost profits and find the next leg to break. We know that these sanctions are just one of many attempts, to quell the groundswell rising for the freedom of Palestine and the right to return. We know that these tactics aim to scare us away from supporting resistance movements and freedom fighters, and we know that it never works! It only ignites us. We know that solidarity is a threat, and threat it shall be, because no one is free until all are free.

Until every cage is empty,
Philadelphia Anarchist Black Cross

Hurricane-Struck North Carolina Prisoners Were Locked in Cells With Their Own Feces for Nearly a Week

by Schuyler Mitchell
from TheIntercept.com
Oct. 2024

In the early morning hours last Friday, Nick climbed out of his bunk at Mountain View Correctional Institution in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, and stepped into a pool of water.

As Hurricane Helene unleashed a torrential downpour over Western North Carolina, Nick, whose story was relayed by a relative and who requested to go by his first name for fear of retribution, realized his single-occupancy cell in the state prison had begun to flood. Then he realized that his toilet no longer flushed.

For the next five days, more than 550 men incarcerated at Mountain View suffered in cells without lights or running water, according to conversations with the family members of four men serving sentences at the facility, as well as one currently incarcerated man. Until they were transferred to different facilities, the prisoners lost all contact with the outside world.

As nearby residents sought refuge from the storm, the men were stuck in prison — by definition, without the freedom to leave — in close quarters with their own excrement for nearly a week from September 27 until October 2.

"My husband told me this morning he's going to have to go see a therapist because of the things that happened in there," Bridget Gentry told The Intercept. "He said, 'We thought we were going to die there. We didn't think anybody was going to come back for us.'"

Family members told The Intercept that their loved ones were forced to defecate in plastic bags after their toilets filled up with feces, stowing the bags in their cells until the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction finally evacuated the facility

Rest in Power

Marcellus Williams 1968-2024

Marcellus Williams was born in South Bend, Indiana in 1968. As a child, he and his family moved to St. Louis. During childhood, he experienced poverty, abuse, and substance use. As a young adult, he would marry a single mother of a young daughter. In 1998, with the help of false testimony, he was targeted by investigators for the murder of Lisha Gayle. Later DNA evidence would exclude him as the perpetrator, but all of his appeals and bids for clemency would fail. Marcellus was locked up for 24 years before being killed by the state of Missouri on September 24th. While in prison, Marcellus studied Islam and wrote poetry. Here is one of this poems:

At last…Another's heartbeat
the silhouettes of their bond visible still at the last glow of the sun
they experience each other and the life of the night as it begins to stir
standing there in silence holding hands
no rush to go back inside
there is so much beauty and comfort in being in love and just being…
– amidst sounds of buzzing
chirps
crickets
the pleasant but irregular blowing of the wind
fireflies dancing in step with the light of the moon
how strange it is to become aware of another's heartbeat
but forget one's own –
finally love.

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.

This year, Indiana is set to resume executions after a decade, during which executions were stalled due to issues with acquiring the necessary pharmaceuticals for lethal injection executions.

on Wednesday evening.

“There were some minor roof leaks during the storm, but no flooding. The buildings held up extremely well during the storm. Water and electrical utilities that serve the prisons and the communities around them were severely damaged,” said Keith Acree, the head of communications at NCDAC. “When it became apparent that power and water outages would be long-term, we made the decisions to relocate offenders.”

Acree said the generator at Mountain View provided electric power to “essential systems”: “Every single light fixture and outlet is not powered, but there is some lighting and power in every area.”

He confirmed that incarcerated people went to the bathroom in plastic bags. “Some offenders did defecate in plastic bags,” he said. “That was a solution they devised on their own.”

Loved ones of men incarcerated at Mountain View claimed food rations were scarce, amounting to four crackers for breakfast, a cup of juice or milk, and two pieces of bread with peanut butter for lunch and dinner. Potable drinking water did not arrive for several days. (“The facilities did not run out of food or water,” said Acree, adding that three meals a day were provided along with bottled water and buckets for flushing toilets.)

On October 3, the NCDAC announced it had evacuated a total of more than 2,000 incarcerated people from five facilities in flood-ravaged Western North Carolina, relocating them further east. “All offenders are safe,” stated the press release.

“We had to stay in a six by nine foot cell with feces in the toilet and the room smelling bad,” said Sammy Harmon Jr., a man incarcerated at Mountain View. He told The Intercept he began to develop sores on his legs due to lack of sanitation.

“I wasn’t doing too good,” he said, “going a week without a shower or water to use the toilet.”

Family members of the men at Mountain View detailed a slow, confusing, and inequitable response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Helene.

The NCDAC’s website says it began to relocate people from a minimum-security women’s prison in Swannanoa and a women’s substance abuse treatment center in Black Mountain on September 30.

Meanwhile, just half a mile down the road from Mountain View, more than 800 men at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution also faced flooding and water outages. They were relocated on October 1, a day before Mountain View. (Craggy Correctional Institution in Asheville was evacuated on October 2, after days of silence from the NCDAC, but did not suffer as dire conditions as the other prisons, according to family members of people incarcerated there.)

“Facilities were prioritized for transfer based on the level of storm impacts to each facility and the information we had about expected restoration of water and power,” said Acree, the state prison system spokesperson. “Avery Mitchell was prioritized above Mountain View due to the nature of its housing areas” — dormitory versus single-cell housing, respectively. “Staff felt that maintaining safety and security in a single cell environment could be maintained effectively for longer than in the open dorms.”

Wendy Floyd, whose fiancé is incarcerated at Avery-Mitchell, said the men lacked drinking water until a delivery arrived by helicopter on Sunday night. The water rations were paltry, Floyd said: “It was basically decide whether you want to drink the water or if you want to wash yourself.”

Avery-Mitchell’s generator kept the power on, but Floyd said that in the absence of running water, the men were also forced to defecate in plastic bags.

“The conditions that residents in Western North Carolina are currently coping with are much more dire than what offenders in the two Spruce Pine prisons experienced,” Acree wrote. “The populations of the two Spruce Pine prisons are extremely fortunate to now be relocated and safe. That’s so much more than many others in western NC have right now.”

A Two-Prison Town

Spruce Pine, where Mountain View and Avery-Mitchell are located, is one of the many small Appalachian towns decimated by flooding from Hurricane Helene. The most deadly hurricane to hit the U.S. mainland since Katrina, Helene’s death toll has surpassed 200 and is expected to climb in coming weeks, as rescue crews strive to locate hundreds of missing people.

In the wake of the devastation, dozens of major news reports have highlighted how the flooding of Spruce Pine could impact its quartz mines and disrupt the global microchip industry — but the town’s incarcerated population has gone entirely overlooked.

Family members described nearly a week of a harrowing communications blackout, as they scoured online groups, emailed the governor, and repeatedly called officials to determine whether their loved ones had survived the hurricane and its aftermath. The NCDAC began posting general updates on its website on September 29, though family members felt the communications were insufficient and vague.

Stephanie Luffman said she began leaving comments on NCDAC’s Facebook page, begging for an update on her partner’s whereabouts.

“I feel like the NCDAC wasn’t going to do anything until I

started raising hell," she said. She considered paying someone in the area to take drone photos of Mountain View, just so she could know if it was still standing.

"I tried calling everyone in the world," said Melanie Walters, whose 26-year-old son is incarcerated at Mountain View. Walters said that when she finally managed to reach the voicemail of NCDAC Secretary Todd Ishee, it instructed callers to only leave messages regarding emergencies, not inquiries about missing prisoners.

"How dare he — it is an emergency when I don't know where my son is for a week," Walters said. She eventually learned from Facebook that somebody in the area had seen buses leaving the prison and figured, "Oh thank God, it's got to be my son."

Loved ones of the incarcerated also noted their frustration surged when they saw NCDAC's announcement that Avery-Mitchell had been evacuated first, without any updates addressing the status of Mountain View.

"Avery-Mitchell, you could literally throw a rock and hit it from Mountain View, they're on the same street," said Gentry.

While Mountain View and Avery-Mitchell are both medium-security facilities, Mountain View requires prisoners to stay locked in single cells for up to 23 hours a day; Avery-Mitchell is dormitory-style.

"I just think they didn't want to deal with the prisoners at Mountain View who were considered higher security risk," said Luffman.

In interviews with The Intercept, sources described several instances of prison guards at Mountain View retaliating against incarcerated people in the aftermath of the storm, including pepper spraying them for yelling and beating an older man for accumulating too many bags of feces.

"Mom, it was so bad," Walters recalled her son telling her. "I can't even tell you everything that happened. It was just so bad. I never want to go back there again."

On September 25, one day before Hurricane Helene made landfall, the NCDAC announced that a man incarcerated at Mountain View had died of an apparent suicide. He had already served seven years and was scheduled for release in January 2028.

"Inside there, you're a number. You do not matter. You are treated worse than a rabid dog," said Gentry. "What happened to him in there to make him think there was no other way? I fear that for my husband every day — that he's just going to give up on coming home."

Book Review:
As Black as Resistance

by TIME/cut *editorial staff*

As Black As Resistance (ABAR), released by AK Press in 2018, is co-authored by Zoé Samudzi and William C. Anderson. Samudzi is a Zimbabwean-American Black feminist writer and activist, who has published articles in several outlets including *Vice* and *The Daily Beast*. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Rhose Island School of Design and an associate editor of *Parapraxis* magazine. Anderson is a writer and activist from Alabama. His work has appeared in *MTV, TruthOut, Pitchfork*, and more. He is a co-founder of the *Offshoot Journal* and co-producer of the Black Autonomy Podcast with JoNina Abron-Ervin and Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, which is "a series of discussions on anarchism and the relevance of its revolutionary ideals to the ongoing Black Liberation Movement."

In *ABAR*, Samudzi and Anderson offer a contribution to the Black Radical Tradition and argue for us to, in the face of settler colonialism and rising fascism, reject liberalism for a more radical program and transformation. The relationship between anarchy and Blackness in this book, is not so much a articulation of a Black anarchism, but an assertion that Blackness is is inherently anarchic: Black people are fundamentally excluded from the state, the social contract, and citizenship. From that starting point, they explore how that guides us on path to freedom and liberation.

In Chapter 1, they describe the history and fundamental character of the U.S. as a settler colony founded on genocide of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Black Africans, and as such, why any loyalty or patriotism to this country is misguided. The last 150 years or so of the American project has been finding ways to oppress and exploit Black people after slavery became untenable. They say, "the existence of free Black people necessitates a complete transformation and destruction of this settler state. The Unites States cannot exist without Black subjection…" The chapter ends with a condemnation of the Democratic Party, liberalism, and the "lesser evil" and a dead-ends and distraction, if not out-right sabotage, of true liberation.

Chapter begins by discussing land, access to resources, and indigeneity in relation to colonialism. They talk about Indigenous groups in Africa, many of whom lived in "land-based and pastoral communalism," in which resources were held in common (though this is not to simplify societal structures or pretend that hierarchies, such as those along gender, did not exist). This leads to a investigation to how national identities are formed, often in response to colonialism, as a way to push back against it, yet it has sometimes served to replace ethnic identities and erase rifts and complications within populations. This cautions against too much reliance on

a simplistic nation-based identity. An example of this danger is the Israeli national identity. The colonization of Palestine by Zionist Jewish people was enabled by European governments for whom it was not an act of reparation for the Holocaust, as popularly believed, but an act of antisemitism so they did not have to receive Jewish refugees. With this is mind, they discuss the Republic of New Afrika, founded in 1968, that "sought the creation of a Black nation in the southeastern states" and question the fate of Native American people on that land: "the actualization of truly liberated land can only come through dialogue and co-conspiratorial work with Native communities and a shared understanding of land use outside of capitalistic models of ownership." Here, Samudzi and Anderson are warning against forms of resistance that actually replicate the oppressive structures they seek to impose, whether they be settler colonialism, capitalism, or domination of nature and misuse of resources.

In the third chapter, they analyze histories of resistance and what they can teach use, starting with the rebellions of Native Americans and enslaved people and maroons. The name the qualities of their resistance as stateless, adaptable, and asymmetrical. They push back against a white-washing of resistance that paints it as pacifist, respectable, intelligible to their enemies, and appealing to sympathy. They emphasize that resistance must be internationalist and must aim to protect the most vulnerable within an identity or population. For example, protecting women and gender diverse people from intra-community violence makes the collective stronger and more truly liberatory. This leads to a brief exploration of Black feminism, which they say "grounds political understandings (and anticapitalist critiques) in embodied knowledge and lived experience." Black feminism addressed how Black women and their specific and unique oppression are excluded from traditional feminist thought.

The final chapter some of the pitfalls or more mainstream resistance, organizing, and movement-building. They have seen movements co-opted, de-fanged, and watered down by moneyed interest who seek to control messaging and select (and enrich) those who represent the more reformist elements. Often we see attempts to turn resistance into calls for Black capitalism, in which a few can prosper while leaving the collective behind. The non-profit industrial complex turns diverse, innovative, grassroots resistance into "experts" and "professional organizers" who focus on policy changes and increasing dependency on the system, instead of dismantling it. They are clear that resistance to this empire requires violence. They also point out the dangers of being too focused on things like marches, petitions, donations, and hashtags: "when these methods are used as the priary or even sole means of combating U.S. authoritarianism, we begin to see them as more than just counterproductive. They foster complacency and [are] created to respond to problems but not actually fix them."

What *As Black As Resistance* offers is not a program or a step-by-step guide to dismantling American empire. (Indeed, any such simplistic program should be met with great skepticism.) What it does offer, is clear, urgent, and profound guiding principles for our organizing and resistance. It teaches us lessons from history to apply to our current circumstances: an anarchistic framework for transformative politics and militant, principled self-defense.

Double Deaths Inside the Annex at New Castle CF!
by Khalfani Malik Khaldun #874304
from IDOCWatch.org
Oct. 2024

Where do i start? It seems that where ever i go people seems to lose their lives. While at Westville inside the unit there a white male prisoner died after he stop drinking water. He was counted like 3 times before it was discovered he died.

I have been inside the annex unit at New Castle since January of 2024.

Last month i was just advised from a fellow convict that two white male prisoners were found dead inside their cells. While i do believe their are some professional medical staff on call at New Castle, i won't point any fingers at anyone. But it seems that someone dropped the ball here. I am speaking out because it could have been me or one of my comrades or a Muslim brother of mines.

One of the men who died i considered to be an associate of mines. Douglas Fancil lived on my range i helped him with legal matters. He like me have been struggling with kidney and stomach issues. We are trying to reach out to his family to i form them on what he was experiencing in the lock up section of the annex.

No one should have to die in prison, but unfortunately it is bound to occur because this is prison. These deaths might be due to negligence and Deliberate indifference. I am calling upon all of my comrades and supporters to keep a close eye on this unit. I am as lover of all humanity, and wrong is wrong no matter how its dressed up.

Let your voices be heard once we learn the truth about these deaths. All power to the people!

Some Thoughts on Dying In Prison
by Tony Vick
from FilterMag.org
Oct. 2024

Over the course of my nearly 30 years in Tennessee Department of Correction custody, I've seen many friends die painlessly. Frank was in the computer class I tutored when one day he just fell down dead over his keyboard. My friend Hawk fell down dead while jogging around the track. No warning signs with either of them—they just went down, and that was that.

"I wish I would drop dead right now while we're talking," said James Hayes, a neighbor of mine at South Central Correctional Facility. "That would make a good story."

James, 71, has been in prison 22 years. He has liver and lung cancer, and diabetes rotting a foot that would have been amputated already if he weren't so close to the end. His pain is such that he's prescribed oral morphine, but to get it he has to go to medical three times a day—even though he now uses a wheelchair—to take the tablets in front of a nurse. He is not eligible for parole.

Gary Garrett, 72, has been in prison for 39 years and now has cancer in his thyroid and throat. Unlike James, he has a release date. It is in 2085. Gary became eligible for parole in 2002, and a mere two decades later was scheduled for his first parole hearing in 2022. He was told to come back in 2024. He recently did so, and was told to come back in 2026. The Tennessee Board of Parole is aware he will not be with us by that time.

Doctors estimate that James and Gary each have a couple of weeks left to live. The hope is to make it to the end without being moved to the prison infirmary, which they've both managed to avoid so far. The infirmary is a cold, desolate place. No one wants to die in prison at all, but we especially don't want to die there.

At times when working on this story I wondered if there was something inappropriate about it; something voyeuristic. Perhaps in other cases there would be. But both James and Gary wanted to talk, and as someone who in the coming years will die in prison too, I wanted to listen.

Many deaths in prison are gawked at just for the sake of it. But many, many more pass by unnoticed, the way our culture of mass incarceration means them to. The public doesn't usually have to decide whether or not to look away from James or Gary, or the the countless others reaching a similarly lonely end, a lifetime after whatever events got them taken away from the rest of the world. The public isn't usually burdened with their existence at all.

"In the middle of our darkest fear there is a place of peace," Gary said. "If we can manage to get to it."

"I went through the first round of chemo thinking that I would make parole."

Death here is cold and impersonal. It's an imposition on everyone waiting to go to chow or to work. It disrupts the routine, and if there's one thing that long-timers hate in prison it's anything that disrupts the routine.

"It's just a nuisance. I've seen old guys be in such pain and misery that their buddies don't want to be around," Gary said. "Makes them think of their own mortality, and who wants to do that? So death in prison is a lonely experience, so that frightens me. I enjoy being around people, and hoped that I would be able to be around my family on the street when I pass."

Gary's cancer predates his first parole hearing. Though the chemo made him sick every day, to the point that he could barely eat, he was optimistic that it would be worth it.

"I went through the first round of chemo thinking that I would make parole," he said. "[I] wanted to stay alive to have some days on the other side of the fence, in the free world."

The days that followed Gary's 2022 parole denial were miserable. But he kept up with the chemo, because there was still hope. After he was denied again in July, he decided not to put himself through chemo anymore. To him, the point of doing so was to live long enough to be freed, and even if against all odds he did hang on until 2026, he knows the board's decision at that time would be the same. The basis for his denial was "seriousness of offense." Like everyone denied for this reason and told to try again in two years, his original conviction won't change between hearings. Gary's conviction would be the same in 2026 as it's been since 1985.

"Back in the day, if two guys had a beef they would duke it out; the guards would allow it. Now, shanks are drawn and they want to kill each other."

Gary has been in prison long enough to remember when all the corrections officers were white.

"They treated the Black inmates bad," he recalled. "We would get beat down for looking at a guard in the eye. It's not so much of that going on now, [although] there's still some Black hate, that's for sure."

But in almost every other way, over the past four decades Gary has seen prison become more violent and less livable. When he first came into the system, and for a number of years after, everyone had access to things that passed the time. There was educational and recreational programming, and enough jobs to go around.

"Now, more people don't work than do, and that just leads to trouble," he said. "Back in the day, if two guys had a beef they

“What He Dreamed in Solitary”
Amit Majmudar

A windowless shed the size of an airplane hangar where birds were bred flightless

Twenty treadmills in a row and twenty rich men running

His old house is East Cleveland, seen from the backseat cage of a slowing cop car, his mom sitting on the lawn

And she got up and rushed to him arms out but her choke chain jerked taut

A prayer rug made of flowing water

A kufi made of his brother’s caul

Bees crawling in and out of the windows of Terminal Tower

His brother, fetal position, kicked by six cops, but his clever body smoking into his own atoms all around them, rising like dust beaten from an old mattress

His old house in East Cleveland with the snow on its roof dyed the color of rocket ice by cop car lights

A prison island off the coast of Sweden where murderers were whittling owls and rapists were doing collages

A state-of-the-art walkway over an abyss, its floor made of one long glass screen that showed the drop below it

Twenty lounge chairs in a row and twenty rich girls sunning

Him dressed in boy shorts and ankle shackles, balancing wine coolers on a tray forbidden to sip

The old house in East Cleveland with his brothers sitting astride the roof in a captain’s hat, face to the wind, excelsior

A concrete mixer with bodies mixed in, pouring a public sculpture where the bodies, trying to emerge, harden into place in attitudes of anguish grasping skyward.

Twenty rich couples strolling their kids through this park to teach them about civil rights

And him equipped with nothing but a hammer and a pen, checking the faces of these figures for his brother

Until the light changes and the concrete bodies softening to marble become those unfinished sculptures of Michelangelo known as The Prisoners

Only they aren’t emerging, they’re returning to their blocks

As he is now, a catnap Rip Van Winkle, twenty minutes and his beard is past his knees

Awakening in solitary yet again

would duke it out; the guards would allow it. Now, shanks are drawn and they want to kill each other … young folks just know how to use a weapon, they don't know how to fight up close."

He hates that so many youngsters are packed in here. He also wants them to know that once they are in here, they better face some hard truths, the first of which is that they're in this alone.

The earlier in their sentence you accept that the state has abandoned you, the sooner you can begin trying to effect some positive change on you own. His second piece of advice is to resist the isolation this place pushes on you, and find some friends. Third, stay out of gang world; that's not the place to find friends. Fourth, pray. If you don't believe in God, you better believe in something.

The dreams James remembers are wonderful. In one, he's walking on the beach. He can feel the water on his feet and the breeze in his hair—really feel it, like it's real.

"I don't want to talk to any church people, they only scare me," James said. "This one chaplain came to visit me in the hospital one time, and he leaned over the bed and asked me if I was going to Heaven or Hell when I died. I told him I was going to the same place he was going to—the dirt. He left."

James didn't get his cancer diagnoses until 2023, after four years of CoreCivic, the private company that operates this facility for profit, telling him he didn't need a costly biopsy and that acetaminophen would do instead.

"I thought I would be all messed up," he said. "But the sicker I get the more calm I seem to find."

James is tired. He's ready to be done. Every day he feels his body eating itself alive. He can't piss or shit on his own. He wears diapers. But beyond that, he no longer feels any sense of purpose to being alive. Without any access to jobs or anything to keep the mind occupied, he doesn't see the point in sticking around.

James isn't afraid of death. It seems straightforward—we all come from nothing, and we all go back to nothing. At times he's afraid of what his final breath will be like. Will he be conscious; will he be in pain. It's the pain that scares him.

"It gets so bad I don't know what to do. If I had an easy way to stop it I would, and yes I mean kill myself. I guess if I really wanted to, I could find ways to do that," he said. "But then, when I do manage to go to sleep, sometimes I remember my dreams. My dreams are the things that keep me from wanting to die."

The dreams James remembers are wonderful. In one that recurs every so often, he's walking on the beach. White sand, blue ocean. The waves pushing up over the tops of his feet. He can feel the warmth of the water, the coolness of the breeze in his hair—really feel it, like it's real. In the dream it's like he's young again, like he could do anything. So he starts to run, and he runs and runs until he wakes up out of breath.

In another dream, he's five or six and holding his granny's hand while they walk down the block. They stop at a soda shop and get ice cream. His granny, the only person who ever made him feel loved, smiles at him and wipes some ice cream off his chin.

While Gary has known what life is like with a loving family, James has not. He wants the next generation to know that if, like him, they got a raw deal, it's a waste of time to be angry about it. For much of his life he didn't bother reaching for anything; too much disappointment already to invite more. But over his years in prison he has come to understand that not everyone in his life is there to use him or to take things from him. He isn't entirely comfortable with the idea of having friends, but he accepts that he has them.

"However young you may be, if you are not happy or people are hurting you, leave. Get out. Do what you have to to be happy and safe," he said. "I'm sitting here in my own piss and shit in prison because I took what the world handed me and didn't try and shake it off and do better. When you get a shitty hand, deal with it. Life's not fair. You can spend your days mad at the world, like I did. Or you can say, 'Fuck this hand' and find another game."

Are Prisons Obsolete? A Prisoner Responds
by Anastazia Schmid
from IDOCWatch.org
Sept. 2024

Note: This is an edited compilation of several letters written to IDOC Watch by Anastazia Schmid in response to Are Prisons Obsolete?, published with her permission.

Thank you so much for sending these amazing books! I have just finished reading Angela Davis' Are Prisons Obsolete? It will take me several letters to respond to all the thoughts this book invoked in me. You are welcome to share my commentary for open dialogue on these very crucial topics and conversations.

My pervading response to this book is unfortunately one of despair. The reason being is prompted by the grim reality of its publication date, and subsequently, the publication dates of all the references that preceded this work. It weighs upon me to KNOW HOW long we have been aware of these interconnected hegemonic power structures that have so grossly, and vastly oppressed so many (now globally as well as nationally) and yet all of these issues and problems have only GROWN to epic proportions rather than being ameliorated or abolished in some way.

It is in this space of awareness that I ask myself, and challenge others to also ask: How and where have these hegemonic ideologies (racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc) been created? What sources solidify the perpetuation of these fallacious human hierarchal beliefs? And therefore, how can we come together to dismantle the things that reinforce those beliefs which then solidify the power structions that grossly harm and oppress their targeted populations?

I have now been imprisoned for 17 years, years that proceed the research and writing of this important book. Herein lies part of what is so distressing, Why is it that more people are NOT aware of the contents/ context of this book FIFTEEN YEARS later?!? To the extent that NOTHING has changed within these systems, only progressively worsened, and only to grow to astronomical proportions? How do we collectively come together to bring mass AWARENESS? To open this dialog to others who would never bother to so much as pick up a book of this type? This is where I open my discussion and commentary.

I ask all the aforementioned questions to engage an even deeper thought process as to the ways and means incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people (I/FIP) have been vilified and dehumanized… in other words, turned into "criminals, convicts, inmates, offenders, felons, prisoners," etc etc etc. These tropes create what I refer to as a "convict race" (a term I reappropriate and expand from Dr. Micol Siegel's, to encompass ALL people, male and female of all races, creeds, etc) who are encompassed in the carceral state, and how this trope instills and solidifies the power structures that oppress and harm those ensnared within it, indefinitely.

Simply being released from prison does not magically restore these people's humanity. If anything, the formerly incarcerated are even further demonized by a non-welcoming external society. Even those who claim they wish to help and "believe in second chances," expect that help or second chance to come through in ways that do not directly involve the people (or the communities) that claim they believe in such things. For example, the number of incarcerated people that gain a higher education while in prison (that is, those of us who have been fortunate enough to do so in states that still provided such programs, during a time they were available), who are then effectively barred from graduate education once we are released from prison, sometimes by the very same institutions that provide our undergraduate educations while were we inside!!! Or the "liberal" communities that fight for housing opportunities for low socioeconomic status people, but will not equally fight for or allow formerly incarcerated people to obtain housing and housing assistance in those very same communities or through the assistance of those said agencies. That attitude of "yeah, we believe they should have a second chance….but not in OUR neighborhood, schools, company, etc."

I say all of this to pose the question of, how do we overcome such deep seeded discriminatory beliefs about people who have become ensnared within a system that has effectively made us less than human, or non-human? Not worthy of the same rights, benefits, or treatment as others, inherently "different," "flawed," ""inferior," etc. How do we make I/FIP just that, PEOPLE? We have to become people worthy of all the accoutrements of life, liberty and the proverbial pursuit of happiness before we can hope to dismantle these deeply ingrained systems of power and control. In these arguments we must understand that such things as "democracy, " justice," and "equality" never existed to begin with for anyone outside of white affluent males (we could certainly add conservative, right wing, Christian, heterosexual on top of that demographic to gain an even clearer perception of exactly WHO and WHAT the "law" applies to. More on that later).

We must examine how we view people: worthy vs. unworthy, deserving vs. undeserving, and how we define, label and categorize people, and how by doing so we effectively remove and exclude specific people or groups from actually being seen as or treated as people. Anytime I/FIP are referred to or viewed as anything other than people, or in a context that tags their crime (or details of their crime) to their words, image, work, testimony, etc. a conscious or subconscious trope is solidified that can and does, harm, oppress, or creates fertile ground for discrimination against that person, often permanently.

We need to look at how and why a life sentence IS the death penalty, really, how ANY prison sentence or felony conviction is a death sentence in that it is a civil and or social death. A person is no longer a person, no longer a viable human being. They are no longer treated as human, but then again, most of those people were never seen as human or equal to begin with. Especially people of color and women. When we speak of "lawbreakers," such discussions are clearly ONLY referring to those who have "been caught" or those who were "convicted." I have yet to encounter a human being who hasn't broken the law in some fashion or regard, yet how easy it has become for any person who hasn't been arrested or convicted in a court of law to assume a righteous position that they themselves are somehow not criminals, not lawbreakers.

The are multiple ways humanity creates dichotomies of "us vs. them." Paradigms and paradoxes that exclude or include certain people or groups thereby creating these hierarchies of existence. These are the things we must address individually and collectively. When, where, why and how do we create these divisions and separations of humanity. Who is excluded? Who is included? Who counts as human, citizen, deserving, worthy? One person cannot have "freedom" or "rights" under any of the current systems without creating "unfreedom" and "no rights" to another, or for one group over another. We have to address these things first.

So where are the tropes of the "convict race" created? Most noticeably, the media. Pay attention to the news in particular.

Newspapers, tv and online source news broadcasts, mainstream magazines, etc. Look at the words and images that are used whenever I/FIP are featured or referred to in basically any context. I have been at the forefront, along with several of my colleagues, in bringing awareness to and opposing the epistemic injustice/ violence that occurs when media sources tag crime/ convictions and/or sensationalize the aforementioned to I/ FIP within media sources. Damning a human being eternally by reiterating crimes and conviction ANY time that person is featured or referred to, particularly AFTER a person's sentence is complete, perpetuates social and civil death, stereotyping and discrimination, sets up person up for attack on every level, effectively continues to lock them out of opportunities, particularly those of basic need: i.e. housing, employment, govt. assistance, education, etc.

The most recent devastation and striking examples of this can be seen in recent articles produced by the New York Times and Indianapolis Star in regard to one of my best friends, and colleagues, Michelle Jones, who was released from prison this past August and is now attending NYU's American Studies PhD program. I purposely chose not to provide extensive commentary on this particular example as A) I feel through pointing out the exact details of what they have done further solidifies exactly what that type of commentary and depiction aims to do, and B) I encourage readers to CRITICALLY examine articles about I/FIP for themselves to see if they are able to distinguish how and where language and imagery is used to distort and taint people's perception about I/FIP in ways that vilify and undermine them as human beings. Beyond the news, look to television programming, films, advertising, books, magazines and basically any other common everyday source of information or entertainment. I argue beyond Angela Davis' argument that such things do not just "normalize" the prison, making it omnipresent, but also it SOLIDIFIES our perceived NEED for the prison as well as defines WHO is supposed to be in prisons, and furthermore, solidifies the power structures that insist the purpose (on one hand) is "safety and security," deserving vs undeserving.

When crime/ conviction is tagged, that becomes the defining identity of said person. It effectively obliterates who the person was prior to the crime/conviction, who they are post, and any other normally defining characteristic of their personhood. If not complete obliteration, certainly a pervasive foreshadowing that cannot be removed. That person spends a lifetime being judged, persecuted and condemned for that action (or, in some cases, the failure to act), regardless of time, change, transformation, other defining characteristics or attributes. He or she must perpetually explain what happened and why ,even to complete strangers, they must continuously defend and attempt to affirm (or reaffirm) who they are as people, they must try to defend their past actions, or certainly continuously "display remorse and/ or guilt" for what has happened. It makes no difference who they were prior to the offense, or the circumstances and conditions under which it occurred, nor does it matter who they are and what they have done with their lives since, the crime/ conviction becomes an indelible stain on their personhood. What Michelle Jones refers to as the "taint of criminality."

So therein lies the conundrum. How do we overcome the taint of criminality and the creation of the convict race to allow the average everyday citizen, those who are NOT members of the more liberal branches of the ivory tower or already a part of alternative and radical groups of thinkers and activists, to become interested and invested in the lives of I/FIP? On the remote chance people do become aware of so many of the issues Angela Davis and others bring to the forefront with books such as these, how do you get those people to care or to see a need and harbor a desire for change when their perceptions are clouded and infiltrated to such core depths by these indefinitely vilifying portrayals and identity markers? How do you even begin to spark interest in these scholarly works or activist movements when the subjects at hand are not seen as subject but mere undeserving objects by the vast majority of dominant society? Some of the work we engage in seeks to challenge and change that dominant narrative, and the pervasive questions of who is a criminal? what is a crime? And furthermore, WHEN does a charge and sentence fully end for those who have been given such labels?

Anytime I encounter these stories or depictions in some form of "news" coverage, I am left feeling outraged and depleted. Yesterday the local news covered a story of a woman's recent release, Lori Tackett. With all the theatrics of a Hollywood horror story, the commentary recapped the grizzly details of the nearly 25 year old crime, including the mention of two co-defendants who were released over a decade, and nearly two decades ago respectively. What I noticed beyond the aforementioned was the failure to discuss the fact that the 2 previously released women in this conviction have lived perfectly law abiding lives ever since, or any mention of details from the past 24 years of Lori's life while incarcerated (save for her appearance on the Dr. Phil show and a letter and poem she had once written, the latter may or may not have pertained to anything related to the crime or conviction). How is this woman, or any other in similar circumstance, ever to be expected to successfully reintegrate into society where there has clearly been an effort to thwart their return by re-criminalizing and vilifying them AFTER their sentence has been served? This is precisely what I mean when I say that ALL prison sentences ARE death sentences.

From that note, I move on to discuss the innumerable incarcerated people who (possibly NOT sentenced to such) do indeed die, unnecessarily, while incarcerated. Be it due to deliberate indifference, internal acts of violence, or medical negligence (the first and last even more so prevalent in this day and age of privatized healthcare in prisons). Over the years I have held an eyewitness account of these occurrences more than once, with little to no recourse for the victims and survivors of those incidents. It is as though several of those incidents, nor the women themselves, ever happened, or existed. The

Plant Profile: Teasel

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: Teasel
Scientific name: *Dipsacus sylvestris*
How to identify: Teasel is a biennial plant, meaning it lives for 2 years. The first year it is just a rosette, or a circular arrangement of leaves coming directly out of the ground. The leaves are easily identifiable because they are prickly and crinkly. In poor conditions the rosettes are only a few inches wide, but in better conditions can be much larger. In the second year, teasel grows a tall stalk, up to 8ft, with a purple or pink flower head at the top. The flower top is encased in several long, pokey sticks, as seen in two of the photos below. The flower head contains many dozens of tiny flowers, and they do not all bloom at the same time. Teasel is easy to identify even in fall and winter, as the stalks often reamin after they die and turn brown. Among and around these old stalks, there will be little rosettes that will grow flowers next year. They often remain green late into or throughout winter

EncounteringTeasel: The English name for Teasel probably comes from people using the spiky parts to tease wool. The Chinese name for another species of *Dipsacus* translates as “restores what is broken” and that tells us much more about this plant’s power. We will look at its physical characteristics that suggest to us its personality and medicinal qualities. The spikiness of the leaves and flowerheads, along with tell, erect stalk, give this plant a masculine energy. The way the leaves clasp the stem is a clue that is working on tendons and muscles, particularly where they are inserted into the bone (similar to the leave into the stem). The persistence of the tall stalk after the plant is dead indicates bones and structural integrity, So we have an affinity for the musculo-skeletal system. Teasel helps the body repair injured, stretched, weak, and atrophied muscles, tendons, and joints, anywhere the structure is deteriorating. The clasping leaves create a little cup around the stem and this cup collects water. (The plant can absorb nutrients from insects that decompose in this water and, as such, are a sort of proto-carnivorous plant.) This water collection suggests a kidney affinity, as the kidneys are the regulators or water and fluid in the body. This action on the kidneys also contributes to Teasel’s effects on the joints, as the kidneys influence their lubrication. They also help drive toxins from the body, which can, among other things, cause stiffness and pain in the joints. In Traditional Chinese Medicine the “kidney essence” is also in charge of the “blueprint” for the patterns of the body. This framework helps us understand how Teasel can help to restore this “blueprint” of how the structure of the body should be laid out, before injury or chronic illness. For example, it can heal scar tissue. It can bring muscles and tendons back into place. And, amazingly, it can be used for Lyme and some other autoimmune diseases, in which the body’s blueprint has been disrupted.

Typically the root is used as medicine, harvested from first-year rosettes when the leaves are large. It is a low-dose herb, only 3 drops of the tinture (alcohol extract) 2-3 times a day. Being near the plant without ingesting it can always be used as way to get some of its psychological medicine. As for the psychological indications, the Teasel person is someone who “jumps in to things bull-headed, head first, and suffers the consequences.” Teasel, along with other spiky plants such as Holly, can be helpful for people who are hostile, irritable, and “prickly,” even when that hostility is turned inward on themselves. I think we all know someone like that!

References: Matthew Wood and Julia Graves

outside world more often than not remains oblivious, and when these happenings are made public, there is a deliberate social indifference, or the incident is briefly spoken of, then disappears before anything comes of it or any real change is made. Who cares what happens to a prisoner?

Such media portrayals are infused with fear and loathing tactics, further publicly shaming people post incarceration. Nothing positive or productive is achieved through this type of media representation. The saddest reality is that these news sources can and will run these articles with or without the person's consent (or even against their expressed consent NOT to have their image, words, work, etc. used). It is as if once a person has a conviction it is fair game for anyone to print, say, project or portray anything about them however they see fit with complete disregard to the person themselves or how this may negatively affect their life and potentially create infinite forms of harm to them on multiple levels. I/FIP are nearly always depicted in very specific stereotyped ways (as are prisons and jails), that solidify the power structures that oppress, harm and marginalize. It is further imperative to bring awareness to the fact that those power structures are intimately interconnected in order to prevent anything that defies those dominant narratives and fallaciously created tropes. Politicians, legislators, capitalist corporations with a vested interest in profits from punishment, lobbyist, major mainstream media sources, universities, government agencies, the medical professions, etc., even spiritual leaders, are interconnected to maintain the entire infrastructure of the prison-industrial complex and the carceral state. Such has been the case throughout American history, only perhaps more insidiously in modern times.

UNREST IN KANAKY
by TIME/cut *editorial staff*

We see prison as one of the grounds from which liberation must stem, so we are always enticed by stories of escape and particularly coordination between inside and outside movements in pursuit of a larger fight. Those moments of upheaval in neo-colonial (i.e. Algeria, Kanaky) and settler-colonial states (i.e. USA a.k.a. Turtle Island, Israeli-occupied Palestine) can create opportunities for escape and furtherance of struggles for freedom. The more that we see our freedom bound to each others' liberation – and act on that solidarity – the more we find worth in each of these fights, regardless of our individual backgrounds. This is why we say "freedom will blossom from the ashes of the prisons."

We are all threatened by the violence of police and the prison system to stay in line, and so many of us find ourselves there for stepping out of line – particularly when factors like generational poverty, institutional racism, and authority give us next to no choice at all. The colonization of our minds, bodies, and the landscape has also undone much of our traditional ways of resolving conflict, largely because we've become so disconnected from every other living being that we don't have positive relationships to begin those conversations from. The drastic rise in "random" and serial violence, too, stems from these developments, as is the increase in diagnoses of depression and anxiety.

So we take notice when protests transformed into an uprising in the South Pacific Island of Kanaky (or New Caledonia, as it is known by the French who colonized it). Earlier this year, France passed measures to give more settlers on the island the ability to vote, watering down the indigenous population's influence. There is a long standing liberation movement in Kanaky who are less interested in voting rights bequeathed by France, and more interested in achieving their sovereignty, which is why things took such a combative turn. In response, French military forces targeted demonstrators, imposed a countrywide ban on TikTok, and seized multiple political prisoners from the Kanaky independence movement, who were taken to mainland France. The Paris chapter of Samidoun gives us more context:

"From the 19th century and the deportation of Toussaint Louverture of Haiti to France, the thousands of Algerians arrested during the uprisings against the French colonization of Algeria at the same time as the detention of the prisoners of the Paris Commune in 1871, the Vietnamese of Hanoi in 1913, deported to Kanaky or other colonies such as Guyana.[1] More recently, the Algerian revolutionaries, massively incarcerated in metropolitan colonial prisons. From a principle inherited from the indigénat[2], and although today we have moved from an administrative decision to a judicial decision, the practice of deportation remains the same.

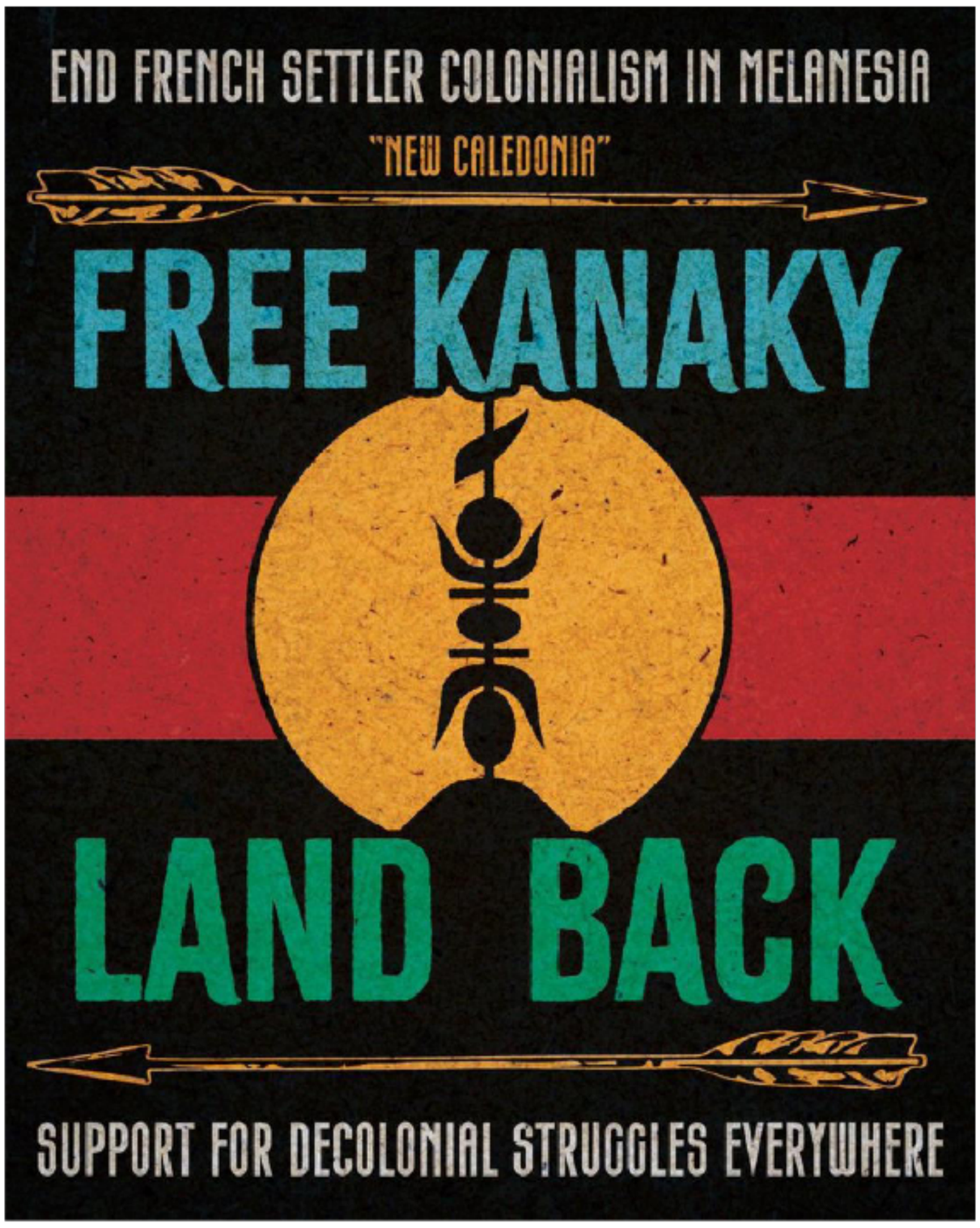
"Particularly used in the context of anti-colonial resistance movements, the deportation of Kanak prisoners to metropolitan colonial prisons has been used on this scale since 1988 in Kanaky, when, after the massacre of 19 Kanak independence fighters who had taken police officers prisoner in the Ouvéa cave, the activists still alive were imprisoned, then deported, then released as part of the Matignon-Oudinot Accords. 26 Kanak prisoners came to populate the prisons of the Paris region while they were still in preventive detention, that is to say awaiting their trials and therefore presumed innocent, as is the case today for the CCAT[3] activists currently incarcerated. In the 1980s, French prisons were shaken by major revolts, particularly against the racism of the guards, who were mostly affiliated with the then-nascent FN[4], and more broadly against the penal policy of the Mitterrand left and the massively expanding length of sentences imposed at the time. In 1988, as former prisoners wrote afterwards, some made a point of showing their solidarity with the Kanaks by sharing their clothes and food with them."

Back in the present day, there were simultaneous road blocks and prison revolts this spring into the summer. Inside three guards were temporarily taken hostage one day, and 80 cells

were rendered unsuable after they were turned over to raiding French forces. Samidoun continues:

"In France, the CRAs (Administrative Detention Centres) represent an ultra-violent manifestation of racism and the management of exiles. People are locked up in terrible and therefore deadly conditions. Thus, faced with colonial management of populations, particularly from former French colonies, resistance is being organized. For example, on the night of Friday 21 to Saturday 22 June 2024, 14 people held at the CRA in Vincennes managed to escape (only one person has been re-arrested since). This follows the escape of 11 detainees in December from this same place of confinement!"

[1] Country on the northern coast of South America.
[2] The Code de l'indigénat were diverse and fluctuating sets of laws and regulations characterized by arbitrariness which created in practice an inferior legal status for natives of French colonies from 1881 until 1944–1947.
[3] The cellule de coordination des actions de terrain is a Kanaky independence group that tranlsates to "The Field Action Co-ordination Cell"
[4] The National Front, now known as the National Rally, is a far right political party in France.



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

Physical Health

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.

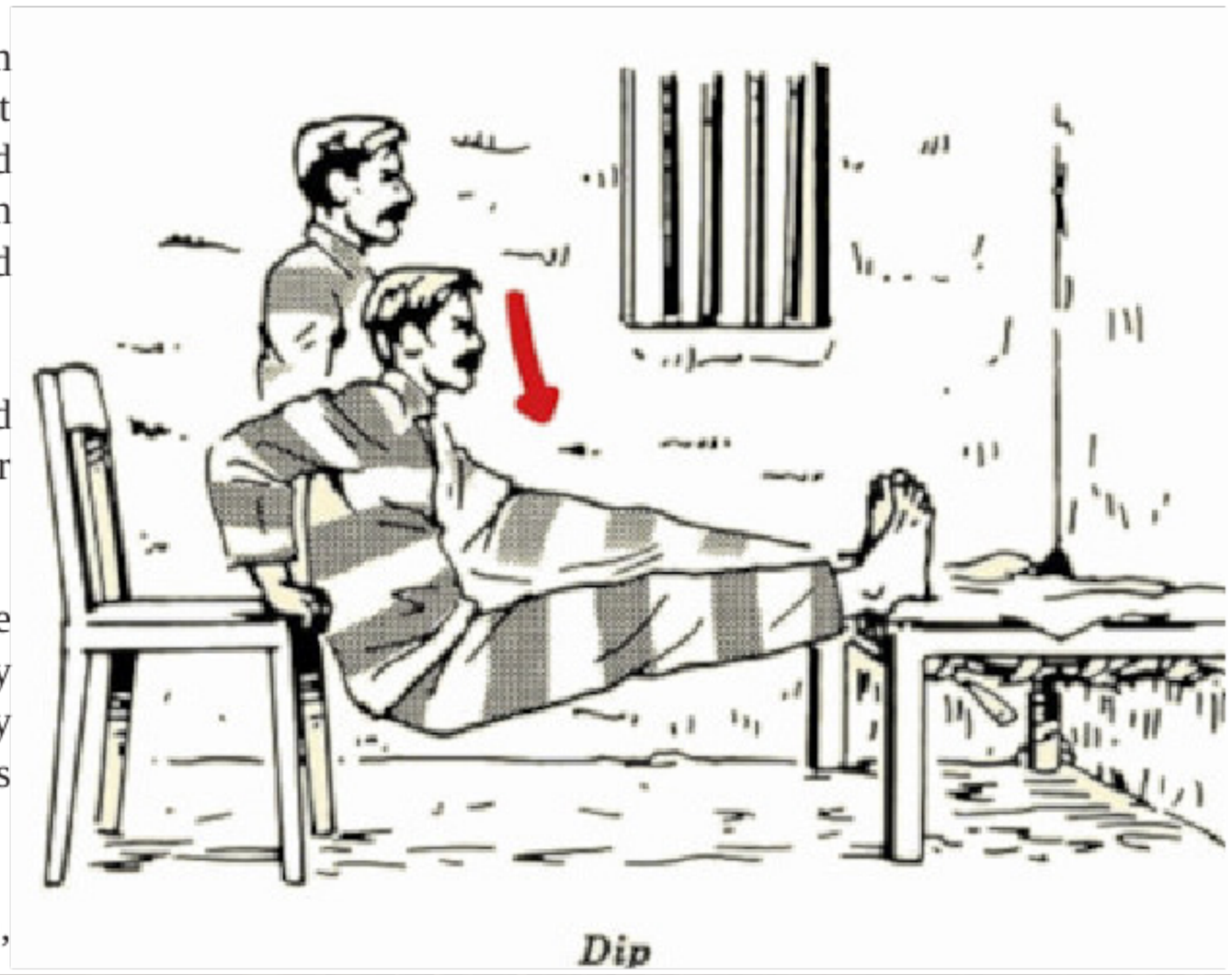
Bench Dip:
A great exercise for the chest, shoulders, and back of arm (pecs, deltoids, triceps). This involves getting your feet off the ground and lowering your entire body down and back up. If it is too challenging, you can also start with your feet on the ground and work up to them positioned on a chair in front of you.

If the exercise becomes too easy, figure out a way to add weight by attaching or positioning something on your frame or between your calves/ankles.

Make sure to avoid flaring your elbows out during the exercise. You want them to stay close to your body. Pay attention to keeping your wrists 'stacked' meaning they do not bend forward or back during the exercise, as this can cause pain or injury.

Avoid trying to perform this exercise as fast as possible, and instead focus on proper form and keeping the pace of the entire exercise controlled to increase muscle tension.

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 dips. Assuming you're up for 12 hours a day, that's 240 dips every day.



Dip

TIME/CUT

5868 E 71st St, Suite E #105
Indianapolis, IN 46220
timecutindiana@riseup.net
timecut.noblogs.org