

# IN THE BELLY



GUESS WHO'S  
BACK.

12

QUARTER 1, 2024



# ***IN THE BELLY***

## *MAGAZINE*



***QUARTER 1, 2024***

# **WHO WE ARE**

We are an abolitionist publication that works to support ecosystems of incarcerated organizing. While we support these projects, we are not an organization that can assist with mutual aid, legal cases, or penpal correspondence.

At our core, we print revolutionary political education material by and for incarcerated people.

## **EDITORS**

Safear Ness    Randy “Ya’iyr Carter    Pierre Pinson    Ian Scott

## **IN THE BELLY COLLECTIVE**

Lauren Ogden    Lainie Rini

## **ARTWORK**

“Animal”    Jose Amaya    Keya    Kenneth M. Key    Martin Bueno    “The Statesman”

## **DESIGN**

Ian Scott    Anthony Fosu

## **THANK YOU**

To all our volunteer transcribers, patrons, and accomplices. The work of *In the Belly* would not be possible without you.

# ***PRINCIPLES OF UNITY***

## ***WE ARE ANTI-CAPITALIST, AS IN...***

We are against the exploitation of land, labor, and people for profit.

## ***WE ARE ANTI-IMPERIALIST, AS IN...***

We are against the domination and colonization of people to sustain capitalism. We believe all people should have control over their own destiny. We recognise that the United States is the core of a vast settler empire and we are determined to struggle against it.

## ***WE ARE ANTI-PATRIARCHY, AS IN...***

We are against the systemic oppression of women and gender nonconforming people. We believe that patriarchy is a tool of colonization and we reject all forms of misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia.

## ***WE ARE ABOLITIONIST, AS IN...***

We see all the above problems as connected to each other. And to struggle against one, is to struggle against them all. This work requires not only the destruction of imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, but also if we are serious about abolishing prison the imagination of a better world based on liberation.

## ***WE PRIORITIZE POLITICAL EDUCATION, AS IN...***

We see political education as a means to giving oppressed people the tools to liberate themselves. Political education builds community; it grounds us in the history of liberatory struggles that came before us, and prepares us for the struggle ahead.

## ***WE PRIORITIZE THE AUTONOMY OF INCARCERATED PEOPLE, AS IN...***

In America incarcerated people are subjected to the full brunt of state oppression. In fact, prisons have been at the forefront of slavery, settler colonialism, and capitalism for the last 400 years. If we are serious about abolishing prisons, we must also be serious about creating a movement that is led by the people it impacts the most.

# ***SUBMIT YOUR WORK!***

1. Our coverage is focused on organizing inside of and against the Prison Industrial Complex. In this, we prioritize the writings of currently incarcerated organizers. We also include important content from free world collaborators.
  2. We publish essays, editorials, first person narratives, poems, political commentary, media reviews, exposés, creative writing pieces, and art.
  3. We prioritize original work, but will accept previously published submissions with permission.
  4. We publish a wide variety of topics including, but not limited to:
    - a. Prison and police abolition
    - b. Decolonization
    - c. Experiments in organizing
    - d. Revolutionary political analysis
    - e. Interventions against liberalism, academia, and the Nonprofit Industrial Complex
    - f. Litigation techniques
- We **do not** accept:
- a. Unprincipled criticism, gossip, or slander
  - b. Pieces that promote racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, or any other forms of bigotry
5. All submissions should be sent to our P.O box at the following address:

In the Belly  
19 Colonnade Way, Suite 117  
PMB #156  
State College, Pennsylvania  
16803

6. Submissions should preferably be between 600 - 1200 words, with a maximum of 2000 words.
  7. Writers should indicate:
    - a. What name should the work be published under
    - b. If they want their contact information to be made available online or in print, if at all.
6. Due to capacity, we are not currently able to respond to all letters and submissions. We will, however, contact all contributors whose work has been accepted.

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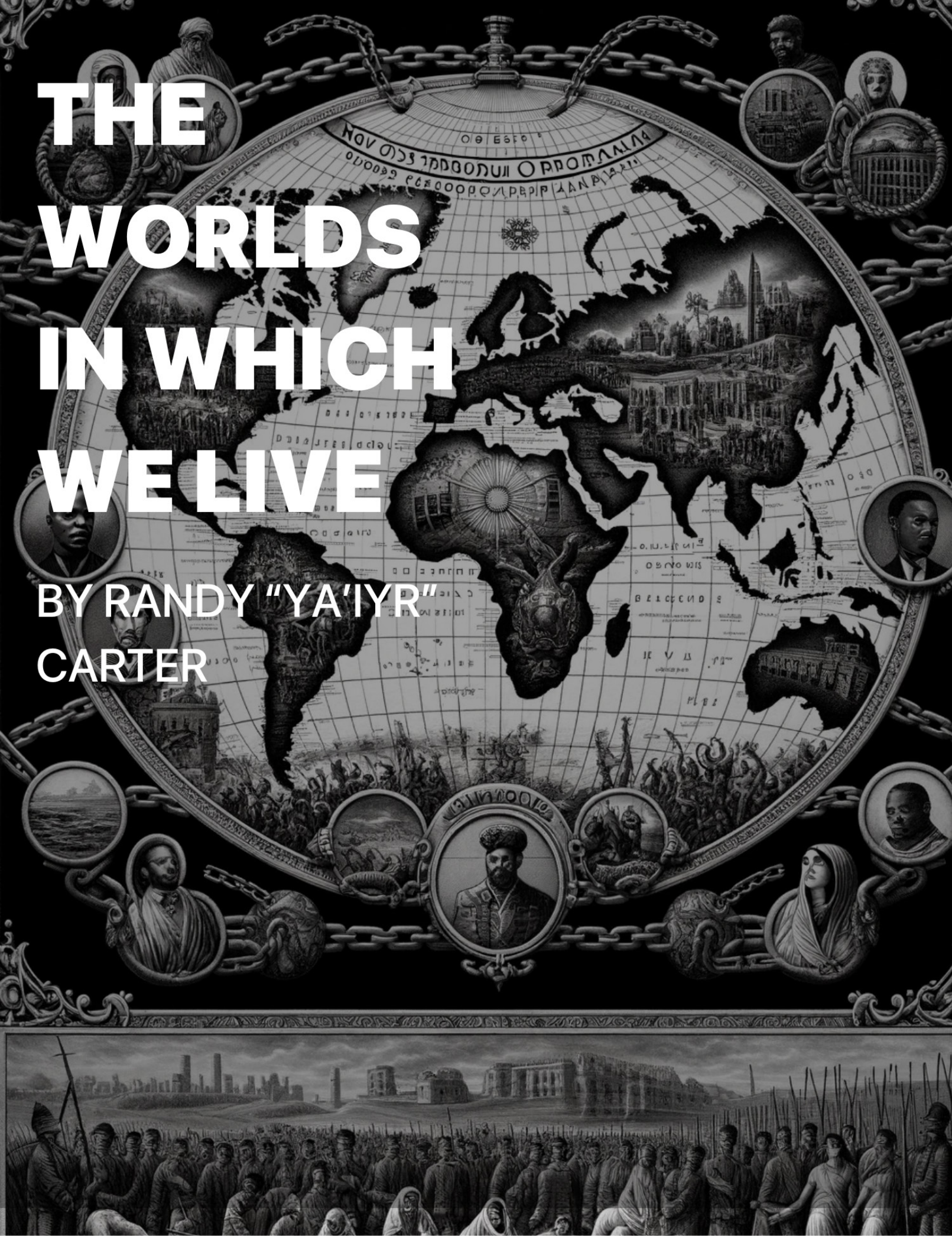
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# THE WORLDS IN WHICH WE LIVE

BY RANDY "YA'IYR"  
CARTER







## WE HAVE JOINED A SUCCESSION OF KNOWLEDGE SHARES IN THE HISTORY OF RESISTANCE.

### THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

#### I'M SUPPOSED TO DIE IN PRISON.

Probably from complications from heart disease, cholesterol, high blood pressure or Alzheimer's. Or maybe from being stabbed. Or possibly from "natural causes" after a beating from the guards.

Maybe at 6 am when they order me to stand and be counted. Or at 7 am when I eat what passes for breakfast. Or when a guard stops me for a random pat search. Each attempt by the state to convince me that I am not my own is an attempt on my life - on my personhood. It is a declaration: I am no one, just a number in their possession.

The architecture of this bondage forms a peculiar structure designed to suppress any sign of life I show and murder my psyche. Basketball courts and football fields are the doors of escapism. Overseers organize leagues; facades of entertainment equivalent to the banjos and

fiddles slavers gave our ancestors for organized parties on Saturday nights. We also have TV, movies, and tablets. We can listen to music and play imitation Tetris. Distractions can be effective pacifiers on the plantation.

Prison is designed to break familial ties and atrophy friendships. It's a spectacle of psychic violence; the savage molding of minds into a cynical worldview found ever present at the most cutthroat extremes of society. "Self preservation" justifies nihilistic individualism and every action from snitching to shooting into a crowd.

For many, conversations about social justice, politics and prison abolition, are fruitless pursuits; examples of naivete. It's not easy to have hope for change while witnessing medical neglect, abuse, and assaults by guards, who enjoy impunity. It can appear we are alone, and fighting back feels futile without people on the outside fighting alongside us. We know without a multitude of people outside applying pressure, there won't be changes in laws, policies, or harmful conditions.

Some of us form communities built on shared principles and the commitment to remain unbroken. We are the few among many. We discuss Black Liberation, the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), and settler colonialism. We debate, sharpening our blades against one another. Sometimes the sound of steel against steel calls newcomers to the training ground. It's like living outside the Matrix, occasionally finding someone who wants to wake up from among the masses. At other times it seems like we're surrounded by people who feel it's easier to stay asleep.

There is also a perception here among some that men like us are a bunch of old guys (35-45 year olds) speaking code language about a long dead movement. History, politics, and social justice seem frivolous to them when living in a prison. Survival, making money, and going home are the top priorities. It's true, we "conscious brothers" are a dying breed.

Almost three years ago, I did some self criticism about what I was, and was not, contributing to the struggle. I could not help but

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wonder if the days of standing up against oppression were behind us. I brought my issue to some of my associates: Do our impromptu debates and history lessons have any material impact? My friends shared my concerns, lamenting that the younger generation is not interested in resistance and revolutionary praxis. Their escape is drugs, and the cycle of depression and addiction is only getting worse.

Then in 2020 the prison plantation overseers used the pandemic as an excuse to lock us in the cells all day, canceling our meetings. This was a tough time for the whole world, but here it was like

the entire prison was in solitary confinement.

Soon after the lockdown, with the help of some friends in the outside world, we began organizing political education study groups. These collaborations with outside folks were new to me. I had not been aware of the many abolitionist organizers and activists beyond the walls. At first I tried to figure out what their game was; how they were profiting from seeking connections with people in prisons. It took some time, but I learned that most of them just want to do their part in the struggle against the PIC.

I connected with some of these

folks and we built bonds. We developed friendships and formed a community. It was two of my imprisoned comrades, Safear and Stevie, who inspired me to start my own study group despite the risk of punishment from prison overseers. We used email and snail mail to connect our members because we could not get together physically. In essence, we created classrooms that permeated walls. The more we learned together, the more I began to see the value of these study groups, and the importance of replicating these scenes of initial engagement between folks inside and outside the walls. These are signs of life in the land of the dead.



**THIS WAS A TOUGH TIME FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, BUT HERE IT WAS LIKE THE ENTIRE PRISON WAS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.**

**EDUCATION AS ABOLITION**

Learning about the history of resistance to oppression helps us analyze the present and informs how we choose to struggle for a better world. History teaches us that we need a mass movement to challenge the system, and history provides us with a myriad of theories and tactics. The mistakes and successes of past movements teach us how to move forward. When people come together they can build power and overcome daunting obstacles. People are capable of momentous change; of building better worlds.

It was in studying with others that I began to recognize the intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality. I also recognized how together we can challenge these oppressions. We do not have to be passive victims or complicit actors. We can be active resisters and builders of a more human and equitable society.

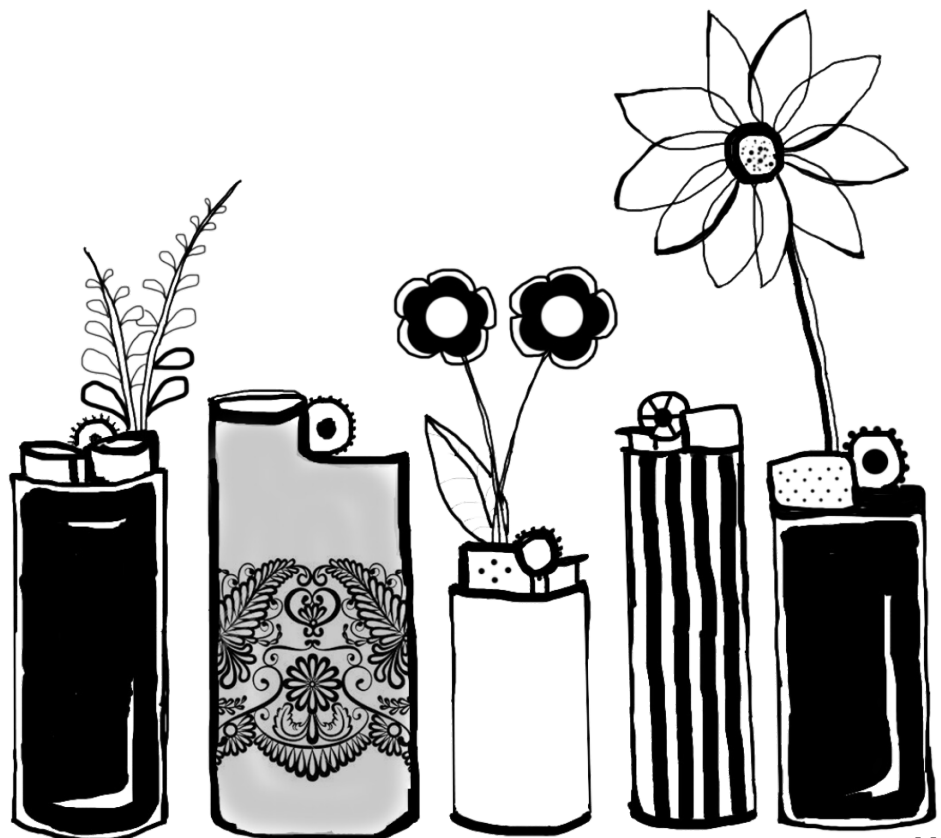
It's challenging work, competing against the distractions that pacify us. The overseers know our studies can guide us

to liberation and work to stop us. It is reminiscent of how enslaved Afrikans were barred from receiving an education. It happens in the so-called free world, too, with politicians banning books on Black history and LGBTQIA+ folks. In here guards censor out mail, blocking books and other literature. They lock us in solitary for "unauthorized group activity." We are a threat because we have joined a succession of knowledge shares in the history of resistance. We are not the well-known faces of the movement, but we are integral to its success.

**REACTION, REPRESSION**

As I have continued this journey, I have watched our small groups grow to become networks and support systems. I have watched myself develop greater political understanding, and more capacity for organizing. And stamina for enduring consequences.

In prison being an organizer gets you sent to solitary confinement, then transferred to a different prison so you can be someone else's problem. It parallels how they used to get rid of "troublemakers" on plantations back in the day. The separating of families was not incidental to the punishment of enslaved Afrikans. It was part of the intended psychological

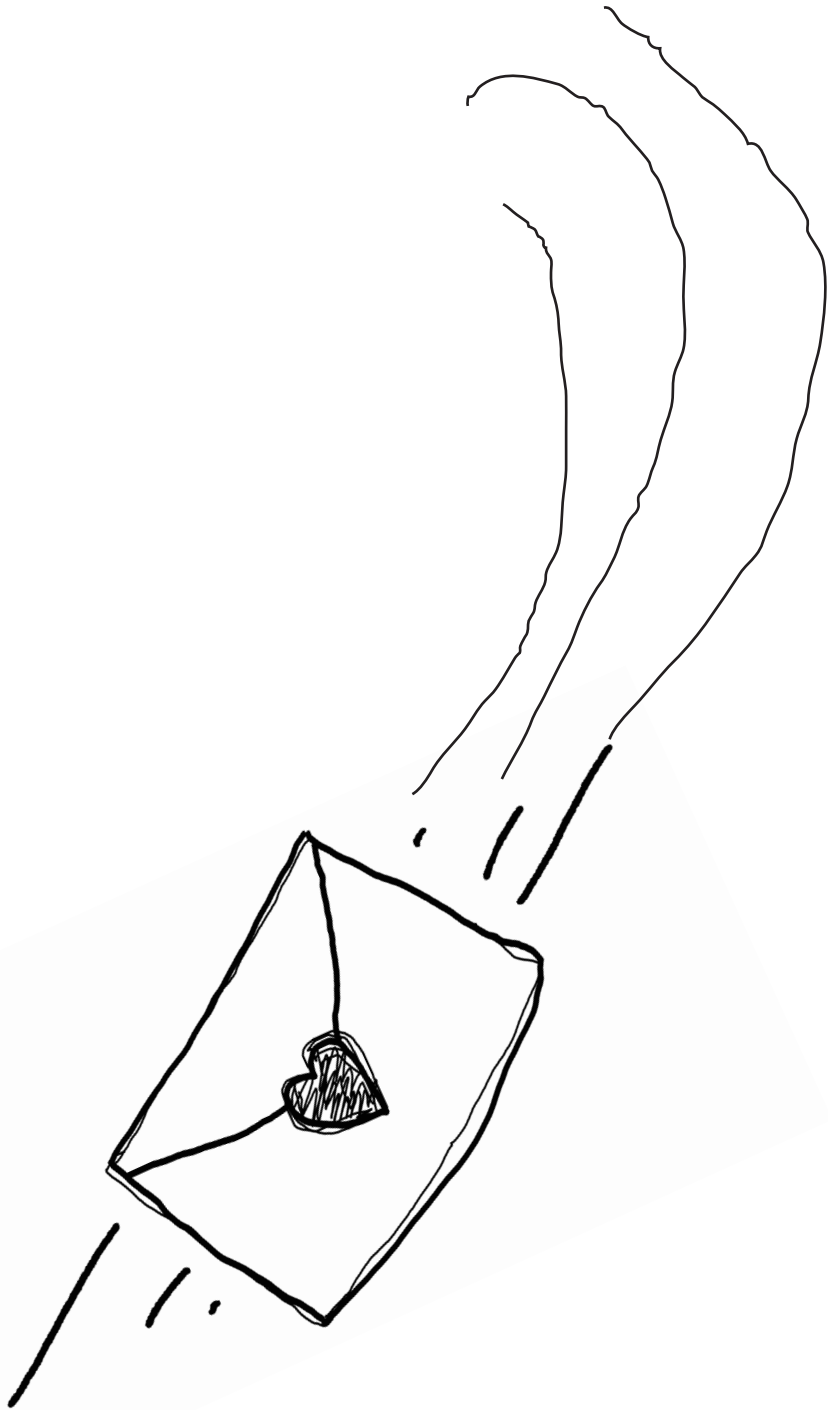


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torture of slavery, and it remains so. On the prison plantation, people coming together to create a community is subversive. And the overseers show themselves true to their history by separating us. Still, we build under siege.

## **WE ARE WORLD BUILDERS**

After almost three years, I have met many new friends, learned a ton, and discovered a nationwide community linked by solidarity. People are making connections, forming organizations, and leading campaigns. One of my comrades left prison to go live and work with the folks he met through study groups. Prison did not make his time meaningless. He filled it with purpose. Though temporarily confined, he turned his position into a place of learning and helped build a community that is stronger than prison walls. It is a growing world where we stand together despite the walls between us. 🐦



# Amerika The Lie

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

Everything in Amerika is inverted

Every ideal it professes perverted

Take for example the name department  
of defense

Which makes absolutely no sense

Its only role invasions

And infiltrations of weaker nations

And the department of justice

Targets just us

The poor, powerless and people of color

But protects those wealthy others

Who commit the real crimes

And undermine

World peace and stability

Because they have the ability

And exercise it

Killing and robbing multitudes but few  
realize it

Because the system shields

The power they wield

Through corporate monopolies

But call it a free market society

Promoting deporting huge portions

Of marginalized groups while opposing  
abortions

And birth control

Assuming the role

Of policing women's bodies

While claiming it's a free society

And the lie of an economy that trickles  
down

But grinds the poor and workers into the  
ground

While the rich few are exempt from tax-  
ation

And drive up the cost of living with infla-  
tion

With cops who swear to serve and pro-  
tect us

But only kill maim and disrespect us

Everything about Amerika is inverted

Every value it claims to uphold perverted

With euphemisms its rulers disguise

A society sustained by lies

Like the claimed land of the free and  
home of the brave

But steeped in racism and built by slaves

A black and white collage of eyes framed by geometric shapes. The image features three prominent eyes, each enclosed in a rectangular frame. These frames are interconnected by a network of thick, dark, angular lines that create a complex, abstract pattern. The overall composition is layered and textured, with various shades of gray and black. The eyes are rendered with realistic detail, showing eyelashes and pupils. The text 'WANNA RACE?' is overlaid in a bold, white, sans-serif font across the upper portion of the collage. Below it, the text 'BY RA-SUN 360°' is also in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally.

# **WANNA RACE?**

**BY RA-SUN 360°**

**MEET CHAD.**

Six-years-old. Sweet kid; curly hair; light-brown complexion like caramel or barely-toasted bread. Chad looks this way because one of his parents is deeply pigmented (or dark-skinned); the other is lesser pigmented or light-skinned. One is considered "black"; the other "white," which makes Chad "mixed-race" or "biracial."

anthropology, and biology, when 16th and 17th century "scientists" sought to segregate species of "humans" by distinguishing them the way botanists and biologists separate plant and animal species. Race taxonomy separates human groups by skin color, by hair texture, and by global region, while anthropology applications indicate historical development of specified lineal ancestry.

Proponents of race biology endeavor to prove that DNA formats such differences. DNA, however, makes no racial distinction in genotypes (what humans look like inside). Human spermatozoan gametes do not discriminate in making human beings. There exist numerous blood "types," but none coordinate to specified phenotypes. Blood type distinction is dependent on heredity; wherein, random procession jumbles DNA like lottery balls. A human may be born with

**WHY DOES RACE NEED TO BE A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION?**

relatively new at 6. Society considers Chad "black," though one of his parents is considered "White." Why not "mixed" as a "race?" Or Black-n-White? Or "Biracial?" According to racism (the shorthand way to impose a double-standard meant to benefit "whiteness"), if one of Chad's parents is black and the other white, Chad is categorically "black." Chad's "race" classification is social. The social merit of Chad's "race" will be validated by how the world perceives him.

He may be expected to have a limited learning capacity—certain physical abilities or endowments. He may be denied access to certain places, barred from opportunities to learn or to know vital information about his ancestry, or denied

Supposedly, "black" and "white" are "races." That is, "anthropological"—"bio-scientific/taxonomic" indicators of distinguishable human phenotypes. (Phenotype: a biology term for the outer physical appearance of an organism—or the way an organism looks. That is, for humans, plants, insects, and animals).

Race terminology derived methodology from taxonomy,

any given blood type. When it comes to human beings, there is no biological means to distinguish "race." So why is it necessary to designate human phenotypes?

Two persons, one male, one female, merge to create a new person, like Chad, who's

access to clean air. To these hindrances he would be blind at 6. At 16 he may notice that he's punished harsher than whites for petty slights, or walk in fear of being murdered by police at any time. For these reasons "race" socially stands.

# CHAD HAS NO IDEA THAT HE'LL BE RELEGATED TO A SOCIETAL TOILET DESIGNED BY RACE AND RACISM.

The path to that social objective travels along a phenotypic spectrum. If biology fails to make the same specification, one may ask, *why does race need to be a social construction?* The surface lie: shorthand distinction for description. The underlying truth: stratification of phenotypes to crown one as superior and others inferior. If the final stratum makes an inferior, a lesser human may be deemed sub-human or inhuman. If an anthropomorphic being walks and talks like a human, but "race" determines that it is sub-human, it can be considered unworthy of human regard. It can be captured and beaten into submission and made to serve the will of those considered human. Its physical make can be spotlighted, probed, and examined in all manners, and placed in exhibition to specify certain physical traits as markers of inferiority.

Race allows phenotype to serve as a qualitative credential for extension and innovation in fields, such as science. A man of superior phenotype is permitted to draw conclusions from conjecture, and classify "lower" phenotypes inferior. Race is not only an imaginary creation, but also a pseudo-biological phenomenon that certifies itself as a scientific authority.

Chad has no idea that he'll be relegated to a societal toilet designed by race and racism. Before long he'll notice how

much harder than his "white" friends he needs to work for equal human opportunities. His parents represent a custom utopia of their own design. Chad is blind to its exclusivity to them. He may never question what about either made his parents attracted to one another. Has his black parent internalized every fallacy racism assigns to



“blackness,” and thus unconsciously (or consciously) seeks to escape it? Has that parent chosen a white partner in an attempt to assimilate into “whiteness”?

What if Chad’s white parent absorbed a litany of myths about “black sexuality”, “physical excellence”, and “innate intellectual deficiency”? Choosing a black partner may combine desire for sensual bliss with sympathy and paternalism. Or Chad’s parents could be “post-racial” progressives who’ve chosen a partner under rationale outside of race identity or racial politics, and resent those who question their motivation.

“Whiteness,” however, employs “race” to carve out whites-only spaces—where Chad and his “black” parent may gain limited entree as individuals, but never as parts of a collective. Regardless, in both “black” and “white” spaces, Chad’s “mixed” origin will suffer simultaneous promotion and demotion: praise within either for his mythical endowments and resentment or discrimination for the same reason. He may reject his “blackness”—always hiding from the sun while pronouncing his “mixed-race” pedigree to make it known that a part of him is “white.” He may reject the idea of “whiteness”—perpetually chasing sunlight and becoming an anti-racist revolutionary black activist. He may develop bipolar syndrome where familial/societal dysfunction drives him to fluctuate between racial personae—oscillating between racist black stereotypes and white supremacist thought and behavioral patterns.

All of the above punctuates the objective of race as a social construct: a means by which to create and sustain a social hierarchy, to manufacture a pluralistic preference or collective opinion regarding that hierarchy, and to maintain an inferior-superior binary between “races” most distinctive (i.e., black and white).

Walking home from school with his white friend Dave, Chad looks over and says, “Wanna race?” They take their marks, aligned equally—for the moment. 🏃





# TO ANYONE WHO WILL LISTEN

## **I had a dream.**

I woke up at 4:05 a.m. and started crying because I wanted to tell my mom that I couldn't do this any more, to just let me go. I was dreaming about my son. We were in the woods at our house in Chatham. He was walking in front of me, and he had his little Pro-Keds sneakers on and a pair of jeans. I could not see his face, but I saw that familiar spring in his step that all kids have when they are two years old and innocent and excited about the world. Unfortunately, I lost him to the criminal justice system when he was 2 years old. He is 19 now.

This emptiness ties knots in my stomach, and I could feel the blood in my veins eating away at what is left of my humanity. As I stare at the wall in the dark, this torture overwhelms me and I look forward to the last bit of my emotional decapitation. I decided to get up and write this letter so that I wouldn't forget this fracture in my being, because by six o'clock some other dream, some other nightmare, will have erased this moment from my life.

I instantly thought of one of my college professors. She taught me about Martin Luther King, systemic racism, mass incarceration, wrongful convictions, and the fact that our country has more people in prison than any other country in the world. Prison and criminal justice reform has been the rhetoric in New York for at least 10 years now. Oh, the Legislature passed the Clean Slate Act for some people out there. Imagine if we all could have a clean slate? The world would be a better place. **I am so tired of dreaming.**

## **CAN I PLEASE GET A CLEAN SLATE?**

**WILLIAM MULLER**  
GREEN HAVEN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

*Bismilah (In the name of God)*

*My Fast this Year Taught Me Some Valuable  
Lessons - Many of Which I Will Keep With Me  
for a Lifetime -*

*We Muslim Men Give ALL Praise to Allah -  
Who We Embrace As The Cherisher and  
Sustainer of ALL The World Far and Wide -*

*I have Welcomed all my Blessings Promised To  
Me This Year -*

*Thank You Allah for My Ramadan 2023, And  
for the Humility You restored in Me.....*

*Khalfani Malik Khaldun, (Leonard B. McQuay),  
#874304,  
5501 South 1100 West,  
Westville, IN. 46391*

**RAMADAN 2023**





# INVISIBLE WOMAN

BY P.

**"Aerielle Jackson appears only  
to be made to disappear. She is  
*METAPHOR*."**

**—Christina Sharp, *In the Wake***

This essay is based on a previous writing that was a part of the Black August Solidarity Cypher 2022. After reading an article entitled, "Black Women and the South Hampton Rebellion" I was forced to directly confront what usually exists on the periphery of Black struggle—The Black woman. The cypher made me reflect on my position within the white racial hierarchy. I was reminded of the saying, "Behind every great man is a great woman." This sentiment helped me understand that, according to this hierarchy the Black woman was not behind me but beneath me.

White supremacy creates a hierarchy with the white male at the apex, beneath is the white female, then comes the Black male, who solely because of his maleness, is positioned above the Black woman who is firmly planted as the foundation. Understanding the structure helped me understand that wherever and whenever Black women are at the bottom—there you find the most effective racism. The two primary advantages of white supremacy are whiteness and maleness. Consequently, the two primary disadvantages are being Black and female. The latter are characteristics that render the individual invisible.

Vanishing Point: The point at which a thing disappears or ceases to exist.

**"The Black woman is the most disrespected and unprotected."**  
**—Malcom X**

The Black feminine is the nexus at which invisibility occurs. It is the point at which humanity vanishes and becomes object. The objectified are then exploited, destroyed and appropriated. Black females are the fastest growing population of the incarcerated; they are pushed out of school at higher and disproportionate rates than their white counterparts. Black women suffer higher infant mortality rates and when they actually disappear —no one

seems to care. Those who dare to exist as Black and female are primed to vanish.

The vanishing point is not only where the Black feminine fades into the obscurity of object, it is also where those in the struggle lose sight. The Black struggle has long been labeled a contest between the white male and the Black male. With this perception the struggle has primarily been premised upon masculinity.



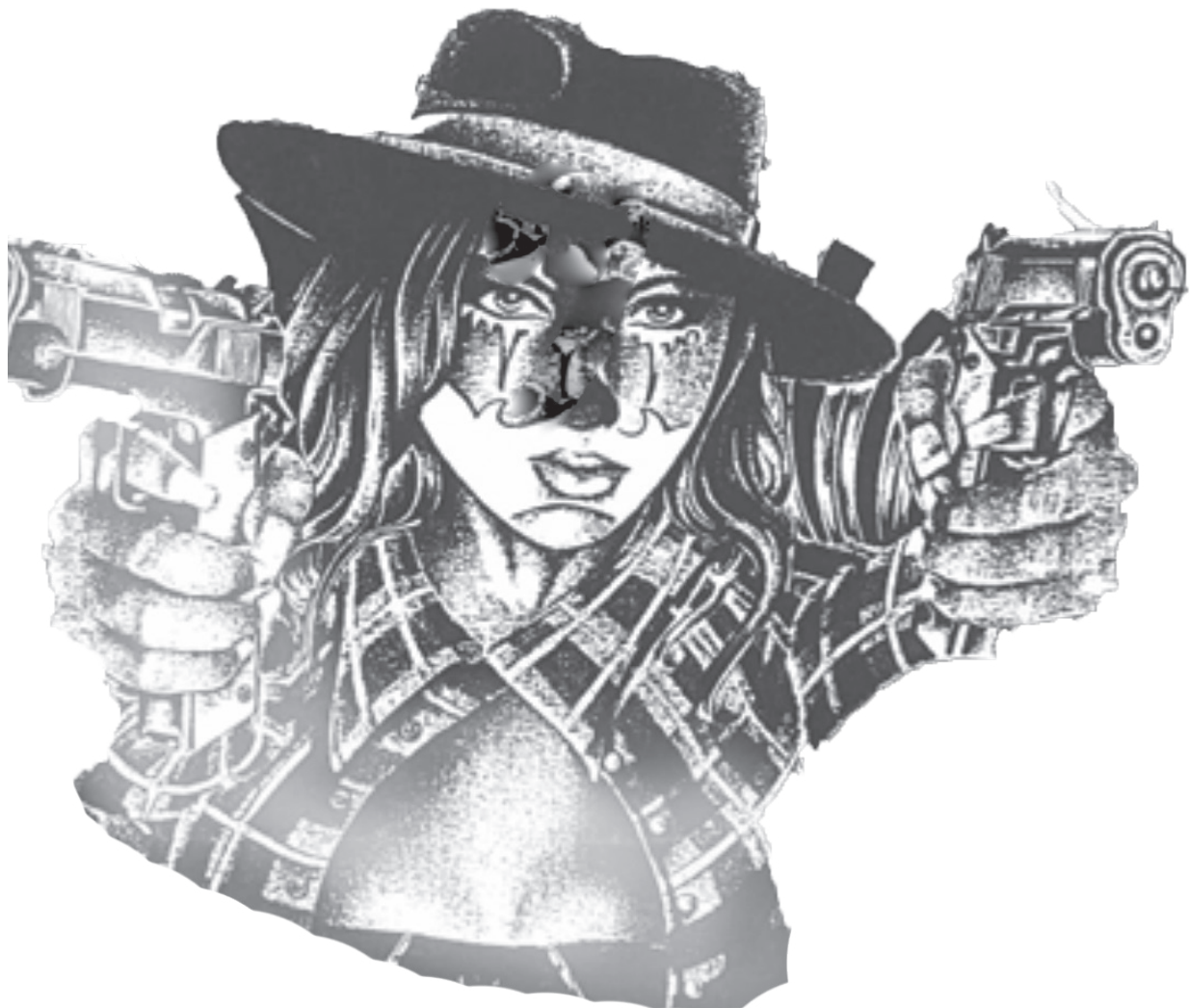
However, if we examine the hierarchy as a physical structure, we would understand it as a pyramid with Black women at its foundation. Therefore, the overthrow of white supremacy requires the elevation of the Black woman. The elevation of the Black woman turns this world upside down.

The elevation cannot be symbolic, such as celebrating so-called accomplishments, milestones and black-firsts. These are "Phantoms of Liberty," meant to placate the people. Look at how many people celebrated Kamala

Harris as the first Black woman to hold the office of vice-president. That accomplishment means nothing within the boundaries of the struggle. It only serves to dupe the enslaved into believing that they too, can one day work in the master's house.

To be clear, enslavement is not the same as slavery. In this context to be enslaved is to be held in mental bondage. The war waged on Blackness is a psychological one that leads to physical destruction. Therefore, there must first be a psychological shift in order for there to be true appreciation and

elevation of the Black feminine. This must be the core of Black resistance. For the Black male, resistance must be denying ourselves the advantages of sexism; it is separating ourselves from the dominance of patriarchy and refusing to use male privilege for exploitation. It is understanding that our Blackness informs our maleness not the other way around. To choose maleness over Blackness is to align ourselves with the very systems and ideologies meant to enslave us. The point at which the Black woman vanishes is the point at which we become complicit. 🐦



# LIFELONG LEARNING

BY BRIAN FULLER

**ULTIMATELY, WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR OWN EDUCATION, OR LACK THEREOF.**

I've always been secretly jealous of people who make academics look easy. Most of us struggle. Yet, it is in that struggle where we reach common ground and attain transcendence. Because after all, if we are willing to invest the effort, we will realize the possibilities.

Never in a million years would I have thought I'd be doing this again. You see, I'm one of the thousands upon thousands who fell through the cracks in the "system." Back when this nightmare first began, I knew I couldn't continue making decisions based on emotional reactions. So very early, I set my sights upon education and outreach. They imprisoned the body... not the mind.

When we get locked up, something happens with our memories. Instead of forgetting them, they go into hyperdrive—permeating our thoughts at will. It's as if someone else has grabbed the remote. The screens inside our heads change and

all we can do is smile in sweet surrender while we bask in the splendor of days gone by.

I was working at a foundry before I got arrested. It was hot, hard, dangerous work. I loved every second of it. When molten metal is poured from the crucible into the mold, it looks like hot lava flowing from a volcano. I'm immediately shot back through space and time to that inquisitive five-year-old sitting on the floor flipping through pages of National Geographic. Dad walks in and I point to the caption. "Etna is Grandnana's name!" He smiles and says, "Close enough. Maybe Etna is how they spell Edna in Italy." I keep turning pages and don't look up when I speak. "Itee is where they make peetsa and skettee."

Autistics are visual learners. I wouldn't even find out I was on the spectrum until much later in life. Everybody always told me I was a smart boy. I was a good boy. All I knew was that

the other kids picked on me. I was a little weirdo and they hated me. I didn't dare tell the grown ups what was really going on in my brain. Those were the days when children were expected to be seen and not heard. To deviate from the norm would let everybody down.

Our public school system was considered top-notch. Nowadays, kids can't imagine a time without computers. I simply loved those old books. The weight of them. The smell of them.

Beautiful illustrations and brilliant photography. Before I could even spell words like "biology", "architecture", and "geography", I'd already been absorbing them subconsciously. Those sneaky teachers had duped me into study time. All the while, I thought I was doing my own thing.

The streets would bring a different kind of training. Navigating social awkwardness and shrewd business negotiations. Staying aware of my surroundings. Reading faces and body language. Skepticism means survival when so many people are trying to swindle you. Don't ever let anyone tell you you're just being paranoid. Follow your instincts. Trust your intuition.

I entered the workforce early in life. Mentally ill does not mean mentally deficient.

Compensation is a poor measure of intelligence. I've worked for some complete imbeciles. All I could do was watch silently in horror as they ran perfectly good

businesses into the ground. I had the willingness to work hard. I just lacked the confidence to speak up.

Moving from job to job broadened my skill set. Regardless of the task, I always struggled with concentration and attention span. My mind would detach from my body; I would daydream, working out pressing problems or projects that really interested me.

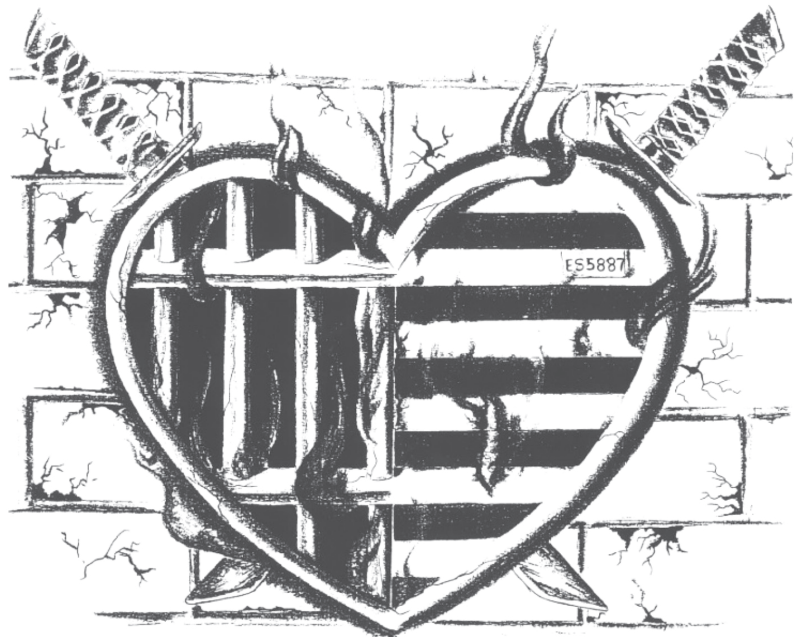
I've done almost every job there is to do in this place. I'm at the age now where they don't make me work if I don't want to. However, I can still work circles around these youngsters. Our "50's" really are the new "30's." Somehow I still feel like a teenager in my head. I'm the oldest student in both of my college courses. I'm even older than one of my professors

We're locked down at the moment. While everybody is trying to figure out how to get their contraband through "shake-down," I'm preoccupied with when we are going to attend class again. This is the first time in roughly two years that our renowned professor has been allowed to come and give lectures in person. I truly enjoy his enthusiasm, focus, and energy.

Out of all the things they could have confiscated, I'll miss these magazine subscriptions the most. For whatever reason, our captors seem to have such a perverse disdain for knowledge that it borders on fear and loathing. When I noticed the cart for the library, I asked the sergeant, "can you please donate those to education?" Art, history, and

literature must be preserved at all costs.

Although their relentless foolishness still makes me angry, I'm learning to channel that energy into fuel. It becomes the catalyst for change. Who knows? Maybe another renaissance will explode out of the kinetic forces locked inside of our own potential. 🐼





# PRISON LIVES MATTER

N E W S L E T T E R

I #1  
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“Prison Lives Matter is a United Front for Political Prisoners, Prisoners of War, Politicized individuals behind enemy lines and their organizations, as well as any outside formations in unison to abolish legalized slavery. Our goal is the connect all the abolition networks together to create an organized body to be a force to be reckoned with. This requires much organization, communication, and education.”

PLM will be sending monthly updates on our organization. The first couple months we will clarify who we are, what are capacity is, and what we need to continue to grow. When we have firmly established a foundation of knowledge we will begin to send meeting minutes & updates on our progress.

## WHO ARE WE?

“Abolitionist who are working towards pushing education, coordinating actions, creating structure, and broadening the struggle, connecting the dots between community oppression (capitalism/colonialism) and the Prison Industrial/Slave Complex, understanding that this is all one struggle.”

**General membership (GM)** is someone who can connect the dots and understands this is all one struggle.

**A Field Marshall** is similar to cadre: someone who has the ability to educate, recruit ,& help implement structure in their prison, community, state, or region

**Regional Organizing Committee** individuals who overstand the line and work with the field marshall to implement structure, as active roles in regional sub-committees.

## WHO MANAGES MEMBERSHIP?

National Coordinating Committee (NCC) & Head Field Marshall’s talk @ monthly meetings accepting new general members, ROC members, & Field Marshall’s.

Field Marshall’s and NCC members have space at the monthly meeting to update on new members in their region, etc (general membership & ROC membership doesn’t necessarily need to be voted on).

NCC members vote on Head Field Marshall’s in monthly meetings, with consensus style voting.

A NCC member or Head Field Marshall can propose a Regional Field Marshall to the group on the monthly call and folks vote on them. Each State ideally has one Head Field Marshall and they can appoint other Field Marshall’s throughout the state (bringing it to the NCC when possible).

\*If you are interested in becoming a Field Marshall (and therefore participating in inside/outside organization and organizing) we require you to send in your PSI (Pre Sentence Investigation Report) & Probably Cause Affidavit. Screening observation & approval evaluation is mandatory & a necessary part of infrastructure/movement building.\*



## Social and Community Development – The People’s Program

For our movement to gain momentum we need the physical infrastructure to effect a national strategy for cadre development to raise the class conscience in our communities. We are following the lead of Abbas Muntaqim with The People’s Program in Oakland, California and Jalil Muntaqim with the People’s Liberation Program in Rochester, NY. By having infrastructure and tangible institutions on the East and West coast, and now in the Mid West, we hope that this class struggle for national unity will set an example for revolutionaries around the nation who struggle along these same political lines.

This community center will be able to host political education programs , a food pantry and free breakfast on the weekends as a part of a Feed the People Program, and an after-school childcare program.

## HOW ARE WE ORGANIZED?

The following is a list of our current sub committees. These committees meet bi-weekly & report back to monthly NCC meetings. As your ROC’s grows have members connect with & join the necessary committees.

- ◆ **Social Media Committee:** run our social media platforms & Create Content
- ◆ **Outreach/In reach Committee:** Folk’s who run the PO Box’s/mail, create Newsletters, journals, & expand the collective
- ◆ **Lawful Committee:** deliberate on possible cases, work on chosend cases & advocate for incarcerated people
- ◆ **Financial/Fundraising Committee:** create fundraising strategies, distribute funding, & keep track of finances
- ◆ **Political Education Committee:** create & collect educational content, as well as, host educational classes
- ◆ **ROC’s / Individual State Committees:** run regional PLM groups (these groups also have their own set of subcommittees)

## Curriculum

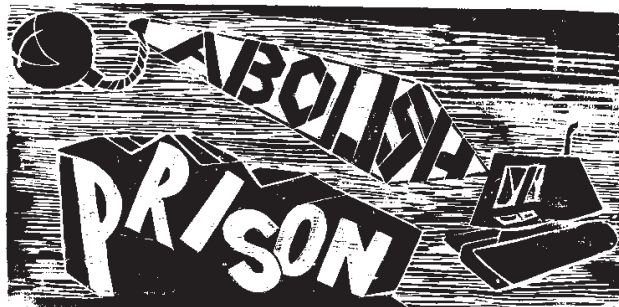
Prison Lives Matter is a collective in which we come together as a like-minded politically oriented community to strategize on how to obtain collective liberation from an oppressive state. Currently we are focusing on cadre development, to educate ourselves on the current political climate and use our critical thinking to find ways to combat oppression. With a focus on POW Journal Book 9 cadre development section to get a better idea on how to move forward. If you would like a copy of this journal please write to us to request it.

- "New Afrikan POW Journals #1-12" (emphasize on 1, 9, &12) (contact us for copies of these journals)
- *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* by J Sakai
- *We Are Our Own Liberators* by, Jalil Muntaqim
- *Stand Up, Struggle Forward* by Sanyika Shakur
- *Lumpen* Ed Mead
- *Cages of Steal* by Ward Churchill
- *Meditations on Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth* by, James Yaki Sayles
- *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* Edited by Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith



## Current Capacity & Needs of PLM

Prison Lives Matter is in it's "Infrastructure Building Stage," this means we don't have the capacity of our long term mission statement & goal. We need people to take on more responsibilities and network inside & outside of prison walls to grow our movement and capacity. We are asking comrades who have been actively organizing & conducting political education classes to step up and help build Regional Organizing Committees (ROCs). Currently we have one main PO BOX that answers all the mail we receive personally, the other PLM PO BOX only sends out content. We would like to see PO BOX's in each region to take on the role of responding to the surplus of mail we receive. The following is a step by step guide on how to create ROC's.



## How to Build Regional Organizing Committee's

### Step 1: Study & Find folks who wanna study with you

Study material should focus on establishing structure/programs, understanding the political line that we are focused on & more importantly how to maintain that line and keep those politics in command.

\*See "Curriculum" above

### Step 2: Focus on Cadre Development

Building individuals up to the point that they overstand the political line & programs, they are able to educate and train others, turning theory into practice. We can have all the theory and programs in writing but we need cadre in action or there is nothing. This includes enacting Decolonization Programs. Part of colonization is that we depend on the oppressor/establishment for education, food, clothing, housing, employment, and security. Decolonization means establishing self determination in all of these spheres. (Contact PLM for more details on roles etc..)

### Step 3: Establish inside-out contact, coordination, & comradeship

*Finding the committed individuals inside & out that are willing to correspond and network to help build the chapters/statewide structure/infrastructure through the roles of ROC (if it does not already exist in your region) Connect with National Coordinating Committee to learn more about creating this infrastructure. Once you've established a list of individuals inside-out set up conference calls to strategize what decolonization looks like and how to actualize it. Network with existing formations; share resources & collaborate on tactics, and form spokes-councils to move ideas forward & maintain communication between formations.*

### Step 4: Political Steering Committee

*Selecting cadre within the collective who are able to strategize and move things forward through sharing collective ideas and finding new ways to turn those ideas and theory into concrete plans of action, that's most suitable for the collective. Doing these things with a focus on what the desires of the collective are and meeting their needs as they move forward.*

### Step 5: Extend your Network

*When you have social media; link up with our FB: "Prison Lives Matter NCC" and lets collectively share each others struggles. Follow us on IG @PLMnational. Have your outside support system check out [www.supportprisonlives.org](http://www.supportprisonlives.org) & join our emailing list.*

*To request a more in-depth break down of PLM Infrastructure Building or to JOIN our mailing list write a request to:*

**PO BOX 134 Arvonnia, VA 23004**

**OR EMAIL [PrisonLivesMatter@protonmail.com](mailto:PrisonLivesMatter@protonmail.com)**

We Can	We Can't
✓ Print/send educational materials, a resource guide, relevant news articles	✗ Be individuals Pen Pals
✓ Send you information on joining PLM as a GM, Field Marshall, ROC or NCC member.	✗ Take on legal cases
✓ Connect you with folks in your region	✗ Take on personal individual requests



# PRISONERS UNITE!

Prisons and prison staff have a habit of stifling any type of prisoner unity even before it begins. Certain boundaries are created and enforced. Staff even go so far as to begin rumors and falsehoods about prisoners to create friction. Race and color boundaries are created and rarely crossed. Boundaries are set up between the heterosexual and LGBTQ community, and crossing those are extremely taboo. Then there are prisoners who have been convicted of certain crimes, such as those which are sexual in nature, and crimes with victims who are children. It doesn't matter if there is innocence claimed or not.

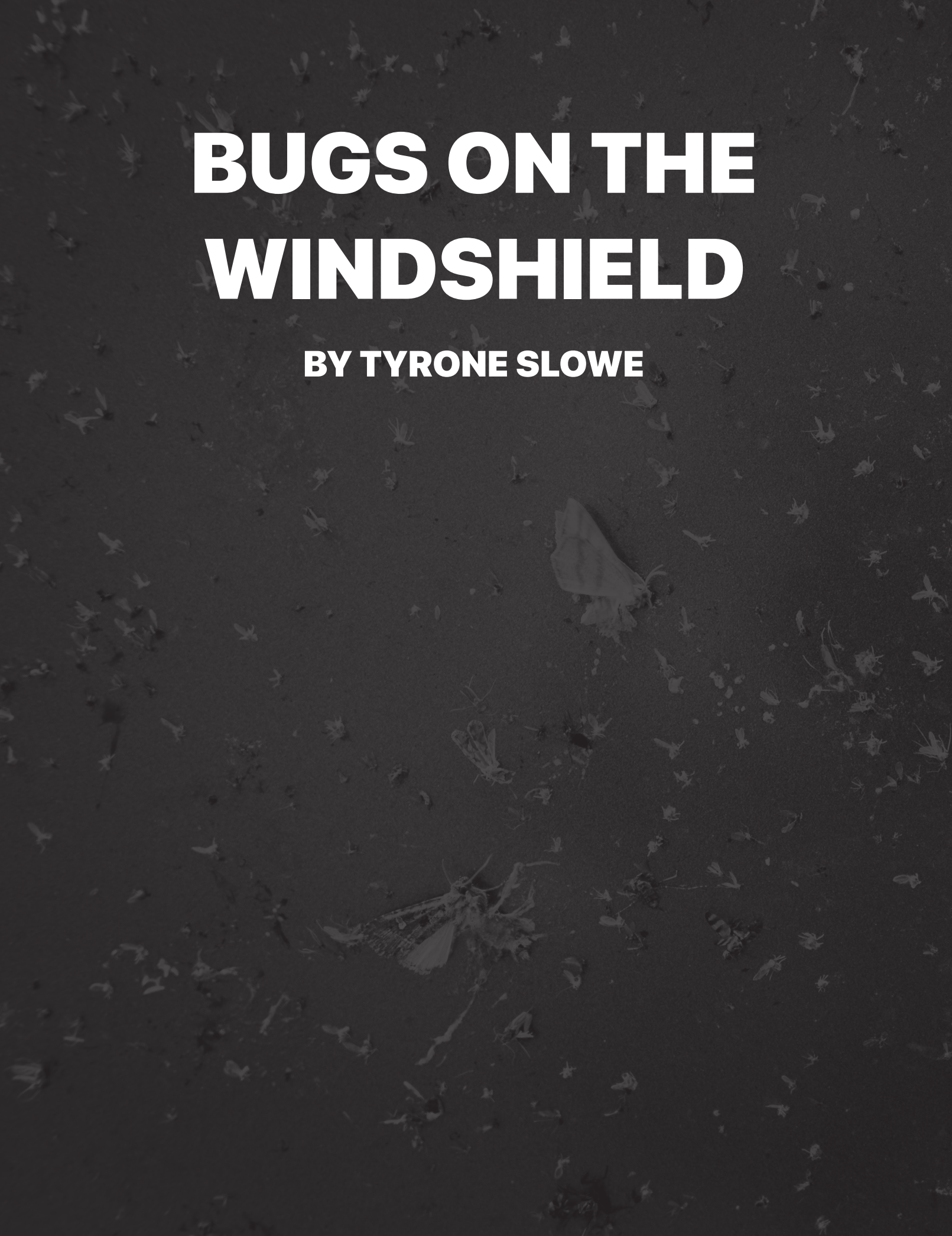
In order to experience prisoner unity and overcome oppression, we as prisoners need to set aside our differences and dare to cross the boundaries prisons create and enforce. Instead of complaining about oppression and prison life, we need to take steps to exhibit unity and work together for the good of us all. When we spend a lot of energy in pulling others down putting up those boundary walls, we lack the energy to put into overcoming the system of oppression.

The prison staff stick together covering one another when one falls into scrutiny for their actions. They have each other's backs no matter what/ Why can't we do the same? It's high time we stick together and strive to collectively overcome the system of oppression. Abolition begins with ourselves. We can be our own liberators if we can choose to exhibit unity and cross those boundary lines.

**THIS IS A CALL FOR PRISONERS OF THE  
SYSTEM TO UNITE!**

# **BUGS ON THE WINDSHIELD**

**BY TYRONE SLOWE**



**Nothing hurts like the pain of losing a loved one to a senseless act of violence.**

It can be even harder to cope when that violence is transacted through the agency of the government. Many Americans have experienced the traumatic reality of having to witness their wrongfully incarcerated loved ones wither away and die under life sentences or be undeservingly murdered through death sentences.

Posthumous exonerations are proof that the criminal justice system is quite literally, fatally flawed. These ceremonies allow the system to own up to its shortcomings and in the process relieve burdens carried by surviving family members and friends. However posthumous exonerations force us to question why there isn't more being done to exonerate before death.

In the legal system an exoneration describes the process of an accused criminal defendant being acquitted, or freed from all blame in whatever charges they may have faced. For wrongfully convicted prisoners serving prison sentences, years can pass fighting and dreaming for that fateful day of vindication.

## THE BIGGEST CRITIQUE IS THAT POSTHUMOUS EXONERATIONS SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE OR NO IMPACT WHATSOEVER TO THE IRREPARABLE HARM THAT HAS BEEN DONE

come. Every year several inmates are executed or die in prison of natural causes, disease, and accidents. It is not unusual for evidence proving a defendant's innocence to surface years or decades after the initial conviction. As some cases demonstrate, that evidence may be discovered too late to save a defendant's life. For those that have suffered from this miscarriage of justice, a growing trend of posthumous exonerations has been emerging in courtrooms throughout the nation arousing healthy amounts of skepticism.

The biggest critique is that posthumous exonerations seem to have little or no impact whatsoever to the irreparable harm that has been done, "The exoneration of a deceased defendant may appear, at first glance, to be a mostly empty gesture" (Wiseman, 687). However, families of victims have expressed that they feel the proceedings are a significant step in the right direction. Clearing the name of the deceased can lift burdens carried by survivors, "We knew he was innocent, and now we want everyone else to know it too" (Vellastrations, 2). Susie Williams Carter told reporters this after a hearing in which

her sibling, Alexander McClay Williams was exonerated 91 years after his state commissioned murder. At 16 years old he became the youngest person to be put to death in Pennsylvania's history. Within six months of his wrongful conviction in which he was accused of murdering a teacher at Glen Mills' infamous facility for youthful offenders, he was executed in the electric chair.

The symbolic clearing of a name itself can be impactful, "Those who are innocent... suffer additional devastation of being blamed for terrible crimes, their names, families, and entire lives are forever tainted" (Wiseman, 703). In certain cultures a family name is cherished and protected; to bring shame upon a family name is sometimes believed to be worse than death because family names last for centuries. Through posthumous exoneration proceedings, the stigma that accompanies criminals can be removed. Though the deceased are unable to witness it, the loved ones can take pleasure in having the truth known.

Families of victims can also be financially compensated through wrongful death lawsuits though no amount of money can properly



Unfortunately for many that day may never

compensate for a life lost.

Though there aren't many documented cases of posthumous exonerations, the number is steadily increasing. One instance of an innocent life lost at the hands of the criminal justice system should be enough to rethink how the system operates. Even low levels of risk or accidental death is not tolerated in other areas of our society besides the prison system. Hypothetically if this rate of unwarranted death occurred in buses, televisions, or hotel stays, the practice would be immediately reformed and made to operate safely. If it was not possible to operate in a safer manner and reduce mortality of innocent life, the

production would be immediately discontinued to avoid the recurrence of such tragedies. In the case of corrections, wrongful deaths are regarded as collateral damage. Prisoners are viewed as insignificant beings unworthy of a second thought, similar to bugs squashed against a windshield. The deaths of these innocent people will never be enough to stop the machine. A major reason for that is most victims aren't "attractive" enough to garner the national attention required to address the ills that run deep within the criminal justice system.

In Life Grover Thompson was a disabled transient who suffered from schizophrenia. He was known to travel from place to

place without shoes on his feet, even in winter. He didn't have much, so it was fairly easy for him to be framed as the fall guy for an attempted murder. It was miraculous that, in death, the students of Southern Illinois University Law cared enough to fight for his name to be cleared. Thompson died of natural causes 14 years after being wrongfully convicted (Kirsch, 1). McClay was a colored man who was already labeled as a criminal for the crime of arson when he was wrongfully executed.

Another notable posthumous exoneration was that of Timothy Cole. He was falsely convicted of rape, which he was known to adamantly deny. 13 years into



his 25 year sentence, he died of an asthma attack picking cotton at his mandatory prison job. It would be another 10 years before Cole would be posthumously exonerated through DNA testing. No one is arguing about what a tragedy it is that these people have lost their lives. They get their posthumous day in court and everyone shakes hands and goes home. Thompson, McClay Williams, and Cole never got the chance to go back home. Sometimes sorry just isn't enough as is the case here. Society needs to ensure this never happens again.

Besides posthumous exonerations there are several other semblances claiming to properly address wrongful convictions that don't address what is needed. The first is the legislation that has been enacted in varying states to compensate victims after exoneration. These statutes do provide much needed support to victims but there are several issues with that. First, the compensation has caps. These caps often fall well below what has been awarded by jurors to victims, most notably the state of Wisconsin only provides \$ 5,000.00 per year with a maximum of \$25,000.00

available to victims. Secondly, it is impossible to put a price on the years of a life that are lost. Who could successfully value witnessing a child born, getting married, or even burying a loved one?

An even larger problem is these statutes are in place to help after people are exonerated. They do nothing to address the needs of those that are in the system.

Criminal appeals are notoriously difficult to win. The only recourse for a victim who can not afford a lawyer (most victims can't, ineffective counsel is a leading cause for wrongful conviction) is to solicit innocence projects for help or try to appeal to the hearts of a lawyer that is willing to accept a case on a pro bono basis (free of charge to the defendant). Both of these tasks are extremely arduous. Innocence projects can take decades to review a case (this is not the same as investigating a case). Innocence projects are often comprised of volunteers and these organizations often have very little resources. Because of these reasons, they generally are only able to accept cases that they are guaranteed to win. For a defendant to have an organization such as these to

commit to represent them it is like hitting the lottery.

Another contributing factor to the deaths of those wrongly convicted is legal manipulation. After years of advocating to reform laws concerning access to post conviction DNA testing in Pennsylvania, Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf introduced a bill to allow broader testing. The bill was signed into law in October 2018. Despite the new law, judges and prosecutors have fought vigorously to deny testing to applicants. President Judge Emeritus, John T. Bender of The Pennsylvania Superior Court also advocated for victims to have better access to testing in his 2015 appellate opinion, "The DNA Testing Statue which was passed unanimously by the General Assembly should be... interpreted in favor of the class of citizens intended to benefit therefrom, namely those wrongly convicted of a crime." (Payne, 272). As a senator, Greenleaf's mission was to exonerate as many wrongly convicted prisoners as possible. Since the passing of the bill, Greenleaf's work has been reduced to just another minor appeal issue. Courts have made the statue very difficult to overcome. The decision to grant

**THE REASON FOR SUCH EXTRANEIOUS MEASURES BEING EMPLOYED IS THAT COURTS DON'T WANT TO OFFER TESTING TO DEFENDANTS THAT THEY BELIEVE ARE GUILTY.**

testing or not has very little to do with a defendant's assertion of innocence. Applicants face upwards of 20 stipulations and even if a defendant has a clearly logical argument for requesting testing like newer technology that could produce substantially more accurate results leading to the discovery of a separate suspect, judges and prosecutors want all the stipulations met. This extensive list of stipulations is a misinterpretation of the law and a clear cut example of legal manipulation; it is tantamount to a perversion of Greenleaf's vision.

The reason for such extraneous measures being employed is that courts don't want to offer testing to defendants that they believe are guilty. Ironically, most judges believe that most defendants are guilty, especially those filing paperwork from a post-conviction position. There are litigants that have been fighting for access to DNA for 20 years and more. The technical hang-ups in the U.S. criminal justice system brings to mind an old legal quotation that has been long lost in the procedural melee, "It is better that 10 guilty persons escape than one innocent suffer"

(Sir Blackstone). Legal manipulation and outright stalling forces defendants to ponder their mortality. For a wrongly convicted prisoner serving a long term sentence and hoping to be exonerated, the

healthiest choices of living must be resorted to and exercise is imperative. With the way that the system operates, with hasty executions for death sentences and sluggish legal proceedings for long term sentences, not only do prisoners hope for exonerations, they have to hope they are alive to see them.

As far as possible solutions are concerned, there are a great deal of cases that have direct evidence related to the crime that is either not linked to the defendant, linked to someone else, or both. Other cases have evidence that has led to inconclusive testing results. Cases such as these should be automatically subjected to re-testing and also should be subject to newer testing methods within an allotted period of time (i.e. every 3 years). Cases that have no physical evidence linked to the suspect should be barred from death penalty eligibility and natural life sentences, no matter how heinous.

Circumstantial evidence (non-physical evidence) is notoriously unreliable. Eyewitness testimony (another form of circumstantial evidence) remains one of the leading causes of wrongful convictions. In the aforementioned cases of Grover Thompson and Timothy Cole, both were identified by eyewitnesses and both undeservingly lost their lives as a result of those mistaken identifications prior to being cleared by DNA Testing. No one should have to die for a maybe.

Posthumous exonerations are the bitterest of sweet moments

in the criminal justice system. Though the relief it provides can be helpful, if the courts were less restrictive of testing and retesting DNA in cases where it is available, less people would die in prison through lengthy incarcerations and the death penalty. 🍌

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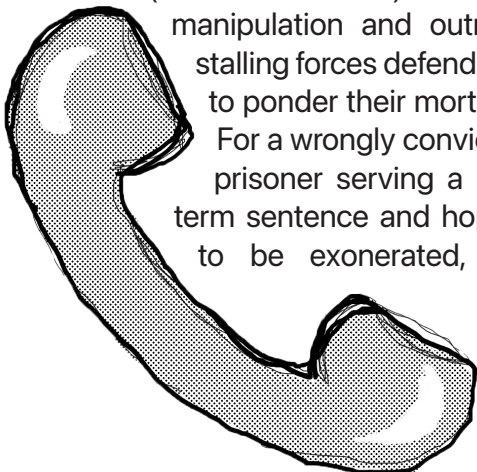
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# THE BIRD

*By Sky Rose*

Maya Angelou's caged bird does not  
sing.  
It wails, screaming for redemption  
to a nation, a society that turns its back  
eyes closed and deaf ears to the  
caged

Prisoners we both are, the bird and I  
at the hands of man, captives  
like the exhibits in a zoo  
"oddities," separate from society

The bird's gilded caged and my iron  
bars  
are different yet the same  
The bird may experience a certain care  
a tenderness, even love

The inmate seldom knows such  
amidst whistles and blaring intercoms  
a cacophony of prisoner and captor  
the daily chaos of incarceration

I know how the caged bird feels  
and it does not sing, it cries  
looking between the bars at freedom  
just as I stand at my barred window 🐦

# PHONE RESISTANCE

*By Safear Ness*

Could you live without your cell phone? How would you function? Most people in the free world couldn't imagine life without it. Prisoners don't have that privilege. Cell phones are prohibited in Pennsylvania State Prison. But for those locked away, there are few things more precious than the phone. It's mounted on the wall, costs a dollar for 15 minutes, and is limited to 20 numbers that must be pre-approved by the prison. Despite its limitations, it's our lifeline to the free world. We live our lives through it. Some get married on it, others divorced. Parents raise children. Children care for parents. We laugh, scream, and cry through the receiver. In prison, a phone is much more than a phone.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) is to "reduce criminal behavior by providing individualized treatment and education to offenders, resulting in successful community reintegration through accountability and positive change." The emptiness of their words is crushed by the hypocrisy of their actions. Studies show that one of the most effective means of decreasing recidivism is a strong support system and building connections in the community. While the PA DOC seems to support this in speech, their policy often reflects differently

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in direct opposition to the mission of "successful community reintegration," the administration at SCI Fayette decided to limit incarcerated people to one 15 minute phone call per day. This essay is how a rainbow coalition of prisoners at Fayette fought the phone restriction policy. And how, despite the mountain of opposition, we won.

When the pandemic first started and prison officials restricted our movement, abolished the chow hall, canceled programming and confined us to our cells, we openly speculated that the prison would use this medical emergency to their advantage and continue these restrictions as a means of control.

As incarcerated people, our communication with the outside world mostly depended on phone calls and video visits. We struggled to maintain relationships with our loved ones on a limit of four 15 minute phone calls each day.

The administration at Fayette asked us to comply with COVID precautions to make the transition easy. Most of us were worried about catching the virus, so we complied. At that point violence among prisoners was almost non-existent. As time passed they told us to take the vaccine to open the prison back up. We were

tired of being locked down, so most of us complied with that too. Then, they offered the booster. We took that too. After all that, the prison administration repaid us by implementing a new policy limiting us to just one 15 minute phone call per day.

News of the phone restriction first came from a video recording posted on a television channel the prison hosts. An administrator announced the new policy in a condescending tone. He claimed that he previously warned us that if we couldn't work out the phone situation ourselves that they would do it for us. He said they were still getting complaints. Now they were taking it into their own hands.

The policy was to implement a phone sign up sheet. Each prisoner would be limited to sign up for one 15 minute slot during their recreational time each day. If there was time left, discretion would be left to the block sergeant to allow further use of the phone. There was no guarantee we could make more than one call.

But it was the administration that created the stressful phone environment in the first place. They split the block into cohorts, only allowing a limited amount of time for everyone to get on the phone. There were too many people, not enough phones,

and not enough time. Instead of extending our time out, or adding more phones to the block, they decided to punish us for a situation they created.

I was heated. My comrades were furious. Everyone that used the phone, which is almost every prisoner, hated the idea of the upcoming restriction. We had already done the best we could to make the phone situation as safe as possible. We created our own phone lines. I was on three different blocks during the lockdown. On each block the lines would be long, and sometimes we couldn't get on at the exact time that we wanted, but everyone eventually had time to get on the phone more than once. To us, the administration was flexing their power. But what, if anything, could be done? Would we take this sitting down? Or would the people finally say enough is enough and stand up to fight?

Prison twitter was ablaze with speculation. A group of us understood that a revolution needs organizers. We had the anger of the people. Now we just needed to channel it. But we had to work fast. The administration announced that the restrictions would be implemented in about a week. First stage: planning.

The planning began with a small group of us housed together on the same block. We came from various social groups in the prison: Muslim, Christian, Black nationalist, white, and "gang" affiliated. Using our networks we checked the pulse of the people. Not a single person wanted the

restriction. Most were ready to take a stand. There was a hurdle to overcome, however. Even amongst those ready, many expressed doubt of whether other people would ride or if they fold when the pressure came.

Our group quickly developed a plan of action. The public action itself was pretty straightforward: We would boycott the phone list and refuse to sign. We anticipated that the prison may counter by preventing us from using the phone so we decided we would boycott the phone altogether. If the restriction continued we would then increase our resistance with a food boycott and send our trays back to the kitchen.

Most social groups have a leader or leaders that they look to for guidance. Some are explicitly labeled a leader, others act in that capacity without the title. Regardless, to be as effective as possible we targeted leaders of the various groups throughout the prison. Once we got them active in the resistance, they influenced others.

Spreading our message as a group to those with influence over large numbers of people allowed us to share some of the risk. Now there was an army of organizers. That made it much more difficult for the administration to identify the initial organizers. And even if they did by sending us to solitary confinement, it wouldn't neutralize the resistance. It's not that we were leaderless. Instead, our leaders were embedded with the people, taking direction from the people, and directly

accountable to them. This is called building a hydra. When you chop a dragon's head off, it dies. A hydra has multiple heads and when you chop one off, two more grow in its place.

A debate occurred over whether we should write a pamphlet to distribute. The writing would be a reminder to the people of all the things the prison had taken from us over the years, their plans for the phone restriction, and our plan to fight back with help from outside accomplices. It would serve as an encouragement to stand up to our oppressors. Some people felt that a pamphlet would make it back to the administration. If that happened, they argued, someone may go to the hole. Others felt like the administration was going to hear about our plans through their informants anyway. Besides, this group said, we want the administration to feel the pressure; we want them to know we don't plan on taking this lightly. Everyone understood that, pamphlet or not, some of us may end up in the hole. In the end it was decided to go forward with distributing it to select organizers who would show it to other people, but take it back when they were done reading it.

Some of us had been developing friendships with free world abolitionists. We knew that if we wanted to pull this off we would need people attacking from the outside in as well. Our outside accomplices were delegated two tasks. First, a phone campaign would be developed on social media. An inside comrade wrote a short description of the restriction

and asked anyone concerned to call the prison and complain. And of course we were advising all incarcerated people to contact their families and inform them of the phone restriction. This would let the administration know we were not alone inside. We relayed this information over a video visit. At the time video visits were less than the phone. And because we were on a time crunch, we couldn't use snail mail. If you have the time, the safest method is snail mail and having a person who is not under surveillance mail it out.

Second, our outside accomplices set up a smart communications account, perhaps multiple accounts, to communicate with prisoners throughout the prison. A prisoner managed to get a list of the names and numbers of incarcerated people throughout the compound. Over 100 prisoners located on different blocks received a message about the upcoming phone restriction and our planned resistance to it. There were some security concerns about taking this step. We didn't want the administration to think they were responsible for organizing on their block. However, we determined that since COVID restrictions might prevent some people being informed, the benefits outweighed the risk. We advised that they send a message back saying that they would not be able to participate in the phone boycott because it was against the rules and to block the sender. That way they would be able to use that as evidence if they ever received a misconduct. War is deception. This method was only used by necessity and

should be avoided if you can. They made an announcement, "If you want to use the phone tomorrow, sign the sheet in the dayroom." Everyone's eyes darted around the block. Who would make the first move? A few comrades and I walked over to the table. There was a memo next to the sign up explaining the policy. We sat near the table and kept watch.

The people were hype about the unity we were witnessing. At one point someone walked over to the desk and signed the list. Before he had a chance to walk away a comrade approached him and explained that we weren't signing the list, that we were protesting the policy. How is it, he explained, that the mission of the DOC is supposed to be rehabilitation and making prisoners productive members of society, but they do nothing to actually make that happen? Studies show that building community support is one of the most important factors to reduce recidivism, yet the administration wants to block our connection to the street. Ain't that fucked up? We were tired of them oppressing us. This time we were standing up. The person agreed and immediately scratched his name off the list.

Out of everyone on the block, there was one person who refused to join the resistance. He was a known bootlicker and suspected informant. His block worker job made him feel like he ran the block with the COs. He found more joy in conversing with them than us. It wasn't a surprise that he continued to sign the list.

Some suggested we get him out the way. But the situation didn't really call for that. We advised the people to abandon him. He didn't have any influence so it was safer to just leave him.

Not every block participated in the boycott. For example, one block with low participation houses the majority of workers in the Correction Industries (CI) shop. They are the highest paid positions in the prison, averaging \$150 a month. These are mostly older men who have come to cherish the money. Many of them are white. This privilege affects their unity with other prisoners.

Many of them confine themselves to the block, never going to the yard where prisoners congregate. What's more concerning is that most of them are buddy-buddy with the COs and staff. It's almost as if they relate more to the administration than the people they are locked up with. This dynamic deserves a more substantial analysis, but at the very least I can say that the administration uses their job as leverage over them. They resemble the petty bourgeois in the free world. Rarely do any of them support collective liberation. They sold their revolutionary impulse for some soups and cookies.

Our outside accomplices continued to call the administration. I don't know what response they received. For us, it was enough that the prison knew we were supported, that they couldn't hide behind their veil of secrecy as they normally do.

Some outside organizers might see social media posts asking them to call prison administrators and think it isn't important: what can my call do? They are wrong. Inside organizing is strengthened by outside support.

On the second day, they came around with the phone list at night again. Only one person signed the list. You know who. The next day the phones ran as normal. The third night was the last time they tried the list. After that there was never a list again. We were surprised no one got locked up. They didn't lock us down either. Perhaps the administration couldn't identify the organizers. Maybe our outside accomplices kept them in check. It could be that their superiors at central office told them to stand down. It's hard to say for sure.

Our war was not decided in an epic battle. There were no victory celebrations. The administration announced no defeat. Instead they let the phone restriction quietly fade away. But we know what happened. We came together; We organized; We fought the phone restriction; We won. Despite everyone that said it would never work, we won.

Incarcerated people are not only separated from the free world, we are separated from each other. Prison erects both physical and interpersonal walls. More modern prisons favor smaller blocks and smaller yards to keep social interaction to a minimum. If the heart of organizing is relationship building, then how do you organize if you don't have the opportunity

to socialize? Incarcerated people must be creative in overcoming these barriers. Prison prescribed-programming can become subversive bases. The law library, school rooms, and religious spaces can become gatherings for organizing. With more time and opportunity we could have utilized these "legitimate" prison spaces to spread word about the phone boycott.

When you find yourself in these spaces, step out of your comfort zone and extend yourself to meet new people. Instead of leading with a statement, throw a question out there. It could be as simple as, "Hey did you hear about such and such news? What do you think about that? Starting conversations for the phone resistance was usually as easy as, "Hey did you hear about the upcoming phone restriction? What do you think about that?" Even people that didn't use the phone often hated the idea of the administration taking more from us. Why? Because they keep taking shit from us and "no one stands up." Anticipate that response. Why is this time different?

Before the phone resistance we spent a lot of time building study groups, connecting incarcerated people with outside activists and increasing our political education collectively. These groups were integral to our resistance. If there are no study groups where you're at, start one right now. Grab a book, take it to the dayroom and start a conversation. It can be as simple as that.

The administration's plan to

restrict the phone backfired in ways they couldn't have imagined. Instead of isolating us from the free world, they brought us together. And when we come together collectively, we win. 🐦

# SCENES FROM PALE



# PALESTINE ACTION U.S.

## **SAN FRANCISCO: Action Taken Against BNY Mellon in Solidarity with Palestine!**

On Dec. 11 the 2nd Street entrance to Bank of New York Mellon's (BNY Mellon) offices was turned into an art piece highlighting their support of the ongoing genocide in Palestine. This was done in solidarity with the ongoing resistance to the Israeli occupation, and to help mark the General Strike called for by Palestinians in response to the U.S. vetoing the U.N. security council resolution to stop the war on Gaza.

BNY Mellon is an American bank that supports the Israeli & U.S. led genocide in Palestine in two major ways: 1) They are a primary funder of Elbit Systems, the largest weapons manufacturer for Israel; 2) they help facilitate U.S. money transfers in support of the IOF through a charitable gift fund titled "Friends of the IDF Donor Advised Fund." BNY Mellon is on the 24th floor of the building that is host to many other offices. The building

occupants should know what their neighbors are doing - they should know about BNY Mellon's complicity in the murder of Palestinian people.

Numerous international companies have divested from Elbit stock noting their contribution to violations of international humanitarian law. In contrast, over the last few years BNY Mellon has continued to increase their holdings (including since October 7th) to a total of 68,000 shares valued at \$13 million. This is direct profiteering from genocide.

This is a call to target all institutions that are implicated in and/or profiting from the murder of children and the ongoing colonization. These offices and the individuals who run them are already drenched with the blood of Palestinians—make it visible. Hold demonstrations, marches, vigils, and clandestine visits until the demands for their divestment from Elbit Systems and the permanent removal of the "Friends of the IDF Donor Advised Fund" from their services are met.

This was done in solidarity with the more than 18,000 Gazan's murdered since Oct. 7th, and all Palestinians resisting Israeli oppression.



# THE PALESTINIAN MARCH

On November 4, 2023, the Palestinian Youth Movement lead over 300,000 people in a march on Washington D.C. to oppose United States support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. Since October 7, the Israeli Occupation Forces have murdered over 30,000 people. This has been one of the most violent chapters in the Palestinian liberation struggle, and Israel's aggression is made possible through sustained military and economic support from the United States government and American-based corporations.

The PYM and their allies are calling for an end to the siege of Gaza, the end of military occupation of Palestine, and the return of Palestinians to their ancestral homeland.





# PROTESTERS ON WASHINGTON





# **DON'T PANIC, STAY TIGHT:**

## **SOME FRONTLINE REFLECTIONS ON BLOCK COP CITY**

*Republished from an anonymous writer on Scenes from the Atlanta Forest*

On Monday, November 13, a group of about 350 people marched from Gresham Park to Constitution Road in an effort to march onto the Cop City construction site. We participated as an affinity group of five people from Atlanta.

"You fight with the army you have, not the army you wish you had." We are writing this report back as a group that was initially skeptical of the Block Cop City initiative, finding the "nonviolent direct action" framework a bit naive. We are not among those who thought it "dangerous" or "liberal." As revolutionaries, we chose to participate despite our reservations, recognizing that the world is not always as we want it to be. We saw few alternate avenues for mass participation in the wake of a failed referendum campaign and an objective decline in the frequency of clandestine actions. We offer our experience, analysis, and critiques from a place of respect for all the organizers and participants, and a desire for revolution in our lifetime.

We unequivocally denounce and distance ourselves from the opportunistic, shameful, and unsolidaristic statements and screeds written by bloggers, passive spectators, and media spokespeople from the City government about this mobilization and its proponents over the last several months. May we all outgrow that part of ourselves seeking to demean and belittle people we disagree with. We send our humble greetings to those who participated in the front of the clash and also those who set fire to 16 Ernst Concrete trucks on the night of the 13th. We are also proud and inspired by the vigil at Dekalb County Jail during which inmates broke windows, set fire to a bush outside the jail, and successfully lowered plastic bags to the ground; bags which protesters filled with cigarettes, lighters, and pizza. While Block Cop City caused hundreds of police to evacuate the construction site of all equipment, the arson on the night of the 13th extended the consequences of the initiative well into the future, halting construction

for at least a week and forcing the APF's concrete provider to unceremoniously back out.

### **ON THE SPOKESCOUNCIL**

The first day of the spokescouncil was an opening presentation and Q&A closing. About 450 people crowded the room, a majority of which were not from Atlanta and had never been to the forest. Many had never been to a protest involving tear gas or less lethal munitions, and a significant percentage had never been to a protest at all. Accordingly, a basic framework for the action was shared as well as some rather necessary information about the forest, the roads surrounding it, and the activity happening there recently. More specific details about the content of the action were discussed the next day.

Organizers of the spokescouncil took responsibility for coordinating hundreds of strangers into a collective conversation, and they did a good job. They declared their support and solidarity with acts of combative protest and clandestine sabotage within the

movement. The room, which remained dedicated to tactical nonviolence for the morning and mid-day of November 13 in the vicinity of the Weelaunee forest only, chanted in unison "if you build it, we will burn it."

At the opening of the second day of the spokescouncil, roughly 30 minutes of the allotted time were taken up by someone who had no intention of attending the action and actively encouraged others not to attend. In a confusing and cliché-filled rant reminiscent of a counter-insurgency handbook script, they suggested that Muscogee people did not support the initiative. They simultaneously accused the group of not being militant enough and of not being careful enough. Another Muscogee person briefly combated them, vocally supporting forest defenders' bravery and courage. Belkis Teran spoke up and shared ideas for supportive roles for those who did not want to attend the action and led the spokescouncil in chants. The opening remarks were closed, and the spokescouncil broke out into color clusters.

The colors were not divided into risk level. Instead, they were divided by position within the march, and by roles. The Blue was the vanguard cluster, assigning itself the responsibility of setting the pace and of clearing obstacles and police if the occasion arose. The Purple was the middle force, assigning itself the responsibility of filling space cleared by Blue, and of planting tree saplings, playing music, and maintaining morale. The Orange cluster was

the rearguard, assigning itself the responsibility of maintaining a solid defense from behind, and a safe zone for others to retreat to in case of injury or chaos.

We participated in the Blue cluster. It seemed that the Blue group volunteers were among the most experienced participants in the room. The group did not have some of the anxieties expressed by other members of the general spokescouncil about adventurous outsiders or legal risks. We discussed tactics with ease and without a need for ideological or strategic debate. The framework of strategic nonviolence was accepted and the task of breaching the site within these parameters was discussed in some detail.

After discussing likely police reactions, we decided to maintain "perpetual forward momentum". For our cluster, this meant that we would not indulge in stare downs or face-offs with the police. Since this was not a photo-op, and since we had nothing to communicate to them, we did not care to yell or chant at cops outfitted in tactical gear. We decided to move around them if possible and through them if necessary. We discussed possible munitions at length, and determined that the use of less lethal munitions would not make us retreat automatically, and that we would only turn around if we were physically incapable of continuing forward. Later, we relayed this to the general spokescouncil.

## **THE MARCH**

When we arrived at Gresham Park

on the morning of Monday the 13th, it became abundantly clear that this was not the "Mass Action" we had been hoping for. It seemed that about a third of the people who had come to Atlanta for the weekend had opted to take on offsite support roles, and very few locals showed up. The march set off with 300-400 people, many of whom were extremely anxious and insisted on stopping every 10-12 steps so that the crowd could "stay together". As locals, we take partial responsibility for not better inoculating newcomers to the fact that the first ~1.5 miles would be on the bike path and through side streets where we were highly unlikely to meet a police response.

The route successfully misdirected the police. Multiple lines of riot cops crowded into the bike tunnel beneath Bouldercrest Road, anticipating we would replicate the route we took into Intrenchment Creek Park on the first morning of the 5th Week of Action (March 2023), which we attempted to take again during the 6th Week of Action (July 2023). When we turned off the bike path onto Cherry Valley Drive, the police had to scramble to regroup. In an online blog post titled "Participant Reflections on Block Cop City," the author(s) incorrectly claimed:

"Even on the day of the action, the planned route that had been agreed upon (marching down constitution road rather than the bike path) was discarded in favor of marching up the bike path, a narrow chokepoint that ended in a fortified tunnel full of Dekalb County Police officers. People

were then funneled back onto the street, ending up on constitution road anyway. From start to finish, it seemed that the police controlled and chose the route that protestors took."

We are grateful for this article, because it offers real insights from a participant without the smug and self-aggrandizing tone and perspective of many other articles and denunciations. We respectfully disagree with the above excerpt, and many other parts of the report as well. Perhaps the author(s) lack of familiarity with the terrain impacted their analysis of what was happening or of what was possible. The part of Gresham Park we departed from does not connect with Constitution Road, and it is necessary to either take another road or the bike path to reach it. Moreover, the march did not encounter any lines of police on the bike path, thus it did not decide to turn on account of their presence. Finally, there was no publicly agreed-upon route. Instead, Block Cop City organizers assured us continuously that not all information was safe to share during the spokescouncils, including the route. We agree with the decision to keep the route a secret until the morning of the action. We expected this, and have experienced this many times in black blocs, counter-summits, and break-away marches. We believe that the secrecy of the route helped produce a situation in which we could clash with police on our own terms, catching them off-guard in such a way that allowed us to temporarily overwhelm them in spite of their

superior weaponry, as well as their commitment to violence in the face of the crowd's commitment to nonviolence.

For those who can only visualize this information bottleneck from afar due to their lack of participation, picture anonymous people in balaclavas, hoodies, sunglasses, gloves, etc. discreetly sharing the march route with those who seemed to come donning similar outfits.

### **THE WEDGE**

Upon meeting the line of riot cops, the Blue cluster continued without hesitation, forming the two banners into a v-shaped wedge. The wedge broke through the police line, as planned the night before. 50-60 protesters from the Blue and Purple cluster got behind the banners, chanting and pushing through three lines of riot police before being blinded and suffocated by tear gas and pepper spray. As the Blue cluster retreated, the Purple cluster scattered amidst the wafting tear gas. The Orange cluster more or less held their position in the street. Many may have been unable to see the clash at all. They gave others a stable crowd to reassemble with or blend into. The clash was more ambitious than the parameters for confrontation discussed at the spokescouncil. Spokes had discussed that if there were multiple lines of riot cops, we would consider alternative routes. We commend the bravery of the Blue cluster, which proceeded until it no longer could, and prevented police from grabbing individuals as we retreated.

As we passed the fire station, I could see a line of armored riot cops filing into Constitution from the direction of the Internchment Creek Park lot. "They're playing our game," said one friend. We kept marching, many of us starting to beat our chests and howl like a pack of wolves in unison. Two cops came forward from the main line, seeking to act as negotiators, holding up a peace sign with one hand while the other gripped his riot shield. "Are we doing this?" I asked. "Hell yeah!" someone responded. "Go toward the little one!" yelled another friend, pointing at one of the (still quite large) cops. The first two cops were bounced off the banners like water off a duck's back. Then came the crush of the crowd against the shields and batons. Large men pushing their full weight into 20-year-old women who can't have weighed much over 100 lbs. For a moment, I could hear the logical, risk-averse voice in my head screaming, "Run! They've got you surrounded!" But by that time, thankfully, it was too late. I temporarily ceased to be an individual, became an organism whose only function was to push forward, holding those in front of me and held by those behind me. I dropped my shoulder into it and moved ahead against the resistance, supported by all those around me and awash in the ecstasy of a good mosh pit. Line after line of police fell away. It seemed we were unstoppable, until the banner-holders fell down under fire of rubber bullets and bean-bag rounds. As we promptly lifted them back up, I felt my friend with whom I had linked arms retreating. Only then

did I realize I could scarcely see or breathe, having been shielded by the umbrella or the adrenaline or some combination of the two.

When I saw the line of police, a sense of relief washed over me. I knew that we stood no chance of making it into the construction site when I saw the crowd at the meet-up point. I was worried that all of these people would have come to Atlanta for nothing. The lines of police showed me my concerns were unfounded. While many people prefer to evade the clash, to move around the danger, to stick to the shadows, I have always preferred the front lines, the exploding canisters, the sour smell of the tear gas, the wild crush of the crowd. Real knowledge lives in the body, not the mind. The experience of the mob howling



in unison, linking arms, rushing headlong into lines of police, is worth years of speculation and theorizing. If we were more numerous, we would have doubtlessly split into multiple corridors to spread the police response thin. "Be water": such is the fashionable watchword. In that case, I probably would have stayed with the big group, certain that they would be fortunate enough to confront the riot police directly. To my left and right, my friends were shoving umbrellas upward, pushing ahead in the dense throng. For a few moments,

it was dark and almost silent. The veil of the umbrellas, the silent heaving, and incredible pressure of the comrades packed together behind the banners is an experience you can't describe easily for those who have never felt it. Eventually, I couldn't breathe anymore and I grabbed someone as I retreated. Thankfully we didn't make it past the fourth line of officers. We would have all been arrested.

For the first hour of the march, I was bored. It wasn't a contemplative boredom but an

agitated one. I wasn't nervous but I could tell other people around me were. As we left the park someone yelled, "It's not a march, it's a direct action." If I had heard that earlier I might have felt better about the character of the march but it was too late. I had no time to adjust my expectations. What I love in crowds was missing. I've walked up the bike path, into and out of the forest, countless times. Sometimes walking my dog, other times evading the police. We walked slow. There must have been thirty photographers backpeddling in front of the

banners. If we confront the police now, they'll be the ones having to break through their line. When we turned onto Cherry Valley things started to change. The soundsystem found its way to the front, neighbors came out of their houses, and then the police came into view. The energy was growing. As we got closer the clarity pushed us faster. The indecision, the anxiety, the debate, was over. There was consensus. We are going to clash. There was no talking or even words anymore, just "Ah-oooh" "Ah-oooh." We started to break through the riot police. I kept my head up, looking at the police as they fought to hold us back. One of them pulled a shotgun with orange tape up and pointed it right into my face. I looked down. I was being pushed in every direction and I was pushing in every direction. We are making it through, I could feel it.

The march did not retreat at the first use of police munitions or force. In fact, the wedge faced police batons, pepper spray, pepper balls, rubber bullets, beanbag rounds, and teargas from the first moment of contact with the skirmish line. The first canister of tear gas was shot above the Blue cluster, landing in the middle of the Purple group. The preparedness of some people in the front, including those who brought umbrellas

and goggles, went a long way in limiting the consequence of those munitions and batons on the Blue and Purple clusters. The use of heat-resistance gloves by a single person in the Purple cluster allowed them to throw the canister of noxious gas away from the crowd.

While the clash was unfolding up front, two people in black clothing, one of them wearing a camouflage baseball hat, attacked someone pushing a sound system in the middle of the crowd. They screamed "the hyenas were right, fuck you guys and fuck your plans." They are certainly referring to a few bloggers who have spent the better part of the last 10 months publishing strange theories and gossip online. We do not think that the hyenas themselves would have ever participated in this kind of action against the march. At least one interpretation of their writings have allowed two people to justify attacking anarchists who were trying to push through lines of riot police. This was misguided and cowardly. We don't know what these two people were thinking, but we hope they reflect on their actions with humility and clarity instead of doubling-down on their obscene, authoritarian, decision. The two opportunists were not up front with the action. They fell back in fright when the tear gas and concussion grenades began landing in the road after the eventual retreat of the wedge.

It is quite possible that had more people from the Purple cluster rushed forward to fill the space

we cleared, the march could have continued past the first lines of police. Given the number of marchers and the overwhelming reinforcements staged farther down Constitution Road, continuing ahead would likely have resulted in many arrests and more injuries. Nobody can say for sure if pushing through would have necessarily allowed us to get on the site. Given that the Police Foundation already cancelled construction for the day in anticipation of the march, occupying the site at all costs would have been a fool's errand. We feel good about the crowd's decision to retreat when it did, with no arrests and only minor injuries.

After the long retreat, out of harm's way, hundreds of people broke out into small groups and discussed ways to continue fighting Cop City in the coming hours, days, weeks, and months.

While we reject the idea that direct action can or should always be safe and scripted, we felt satisfied with this action, which was able to engage in a frontal clash with the police without serious negative consequences.

### **ON PARAMETERS**

We applaud everyone who took initiative to organize this convergence. We know that the punishment for taking initiative is the gossip, animosity, bitterness, resentment, and shit-talk of spectators, jealous people, die-hards, and ideologues. We do not want to add our voices to the obnoxious chit-chat. The following reflections should be read with a convivial and light-

hearted tone, the tone of people reviewing a collaborative art piece, or members of a band reflecting on their collective performance.

In general, we disagree with the setting of nonviolent parameters. Frankly, we disagree with tactical parameters in general and with the minutely "organized" coordination of events, although we recognize that this type of attention to detail makes some people feel more confident and brave. We believe that the march would have been more successful at breaking through police lines and potentially breaching the site had it been able to use projectiles. We also recognize that it is impossible to know if this crowd could have even materialized without the parameters. We do not believe that it is possible to know if the "nonviolence" language in the promotion helped or hindered attendance without conducting a thorough interview with attendees before the action occurred. It is our unprovable suspicion that it did not increase participation much, and that it only shifted it from one segment of the population to another. It is also conceivable that a high percentage of those in attendance would have attended if the event was only branded as a "mass direct action." We did not put in the energy to organize a convergence of this nature, so we cannot be sure of all the details and considerations informing the discursive framing of the event. Without the parameters, we may have seen a more militant and experienced crowd. Perhaps it would have been smaller, but more capable. We do not know if this is true either, judging by the small demonstration following

Tortuguita's murder, and the small crowd that assembled for the 6th Week of Action. Regardless, given the forces we had and the terrain (which is currently much more favorable to police than protesters), it made sense to pull some of our punches.

Perhaps an intention of the organizers in setting these parameters was to re-establish trust with the socialist and abolitionist Left, factions of which used March 5th as an excuse to distance themselves from the direct action-oriented segments of the movement. In our experience, though they support bold action abstractly, these parts of the local Left never really show up to actions they do not organize. This does not mean they are untrustworthy. We also respect and understand efforts to build alliances, because we believe that the real nature of politics is war, and the side with greater alliances can ultimately marshal the greater force. That said, we don't think the mobilization worked to build those alliances as intended. We hope to be proven wrong.

We also recognize that an innovative and misleading form of political queitism is re-emerging at this phase of the movement. Some people have taken to over-emphasizing the violence and capacity of the police, hoping to lead people to believe that only extremely disciplined, clandestine, and destructive force is adequate for the task at hand. This framework is lodged energetically somewhere in the political Venn-diagram connecting the "we keep us safe" community

organizer world, the "nihilist" environmentalist subculture, and the militarist orientation of left wing militias. Because proponents of this framework cannot be held accountable for following through on their proposals (since it would be an unjustifiable security risk to inquire), we believe that for most (but not all) proponents of this theory, it is just the latest and most fashionable way to retreat from real confrontation with Cop City and its supporters. We are not a part of this tendency.

We hope the disproportionate police response dispelled the narrative that pacifism can keep us safe from police violence, while re-broadening the definition of "nonviolence" back to where it was during the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War movement of the 1960s and 70s. More than that, we hope that some of those who participated feel encouraged to take confident and bold initiative moving forward, with whatever means or tactics they prefer.

Fight peacefully, fight forcefully. However you are willing, just fight.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES**

We will not know the real consequences of this experiment for at least a couple weeks or months. For our part, we feel that the BCC action did well to "break the spell" of the RICO indictments and general atmosphere of repression. Some of us had grown wary of public demos, extremely fearful of arrest and long-term legal consequences despite being seasoned participants in the riotous events of the George

Floyd Uprising and prior. Police arrested only one person during the weekend. They were not in the crowd or in the march. That person was charged with misdemeanor obstruction. If we were to guess, we think that the movement has created circumstances in which the state feels it can no longer charge people with Domestic Terrorism and RICO, for to do so weakens the initial case. The last ten people arrested in the vicinity of the forest or even on the construction site have only received misdemeanor charges. This may be a higher level strategy of the prosecutor to illustrate that they have a discriminate strategy of law enforcement, and are only charging "actual terrorists" with terrorism. Only more action can clarify this matter.

We hope to see self-directed action taking place in cities across America continuing the protracted struggle against Cop City. The paths proposed in the "What's Next" info session on Sunday—chiefly the "Uncover Cop City" campaign targeting insurance providers Nationwide and Accident Fund—should be undertaken with the same tenacity as was the campaign against Atlas Technical Consultants, who dropped out of the project after "you guys smashed all our windows," according to an executive.

## **FINAL NOTE ON "HIERARCHY" AND "DISMISSIVENESS"**

In a final debrief session following the action, one participant noted a tension within the reflections of

many other attendees: on the one hand, people decried organizers for not taking more responsibility for keeping everyone safe (e.g. through mass purchase of respirators and goggles); on the other hand, they criticized organizers for being hierarchical. When they say "hierarchical," we think they must mean that there was some discretion and secrecy about the route and the anonymous group who intended to break down the perimeter fence. We can't really think of what else they could have meant, because the organization of the weekend was gratuitously, painfully, democratic. We would have preferred a slightly less democratic weekend, even. We do not think that secrecy is a true hierarchy, but we understand that hierarchies do often involve an element of secrecy.

We also do not think that debate and principled disagreement are forms of "dismissal", as has been claimed elsewhere. From time to time, individuals or groups make objections or claims with the tone of someone who has been silenced or harmed, even if they have not. If their concern or idea is not immediately adopted by everyone, they claim to be "silenced." This, we feel, is the real authoritarianism we see in movements time and again. We also believe that those who act this way do not always realize the effects their actions have on others and probably do not intend to consolidate influence for themselves, even if their actions do often come across that way to others.

During the Block Cop City weekend, several of these contradictory positions were frequently expressed by the same small group. The comrade who pointed out this tension later did so in a kind and thoughtful manner, suggesting that this represented a sort of dialectical awakening of autonomy in the heart of each individual. We all have to confront the terrible burden of autonomy and freedom head-on.

In the end, there is only anarchy and the fear of anarchy. Let's keep pushing ahead by every single means at our disposal. Smash their windows with rocks, break their lines head on.