

Black August Edition

NO SHACKLES

Vol 1.12

Letter from the Editor

Brothers and Sisters,

This last special Black August edition of No Shackles will highlight the outcome of August 19th's Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March as well as inform readers with ways to stay connected and keep organizing post the march. We did an incredible job coming together under the weight of this cause to inform the people about the 13th amendments exception clause and the negative effects it is having on society. This newsletter begins with some statistic evidence of the mass industrial prison complex. In a capital democracy we must follow the money by looking at the budget in order to see where a society places its economic value. These numbers are the reason why we marched for prisoners' human rights last week, it's evident to see that there is a direct connection here with the exploitation of human life. Following this article is a piece I wrote on my plane ride back to Seattle from Washington D.C. after the march and I was very pleased with the outcome. Having the opportunity to speak at this rally was a privilege and I'd like to again thank Chanton Miles and Lacino Hamilton, prisoners in Michigan's Department of Corrections, for their contributions to my speech. These brothers allowed me to include the prisons' voice in this historic moment. The fight of the incarcerated has deeply become my own and many have you in an attempt to contact me and respond to the newsletter have mailed the IamWE address, those letters I receive on a delay and with this end to the No Shackles newsletter I want to be sure that anyone who wishes to contact me is able to do so. For any comments, concerns, requests or to subscribe to my future publications you can mail me directly here:

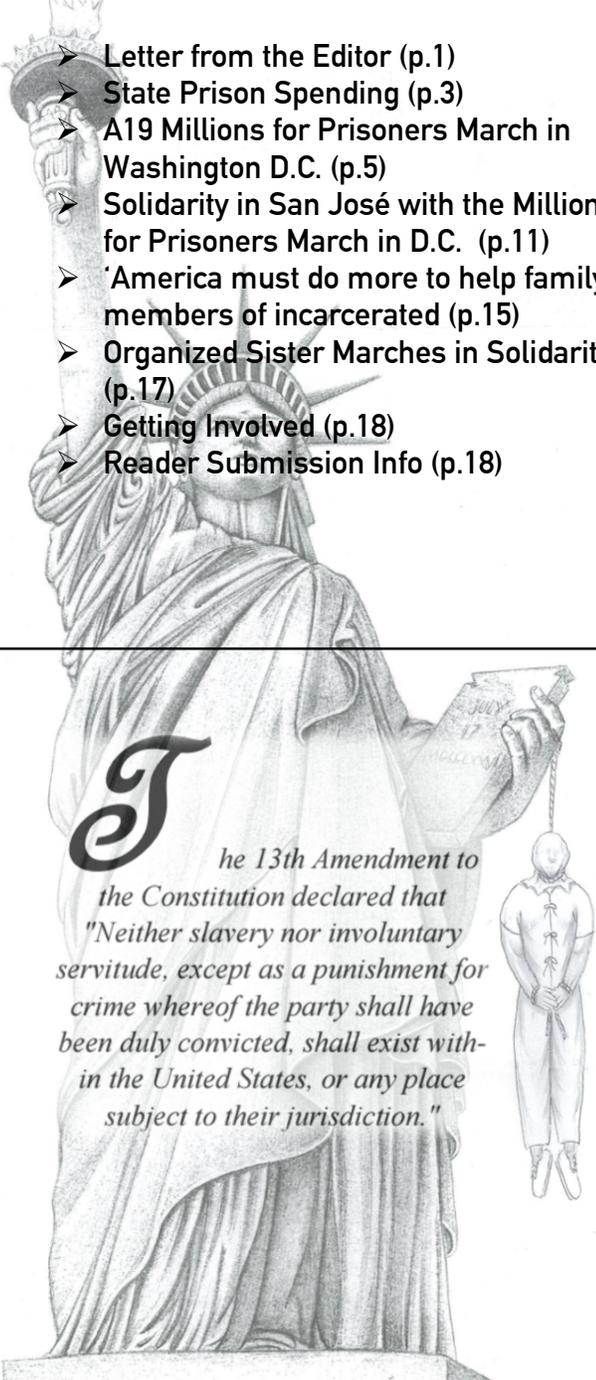
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In solidarity,
Amani Sawari (@SawariMi)



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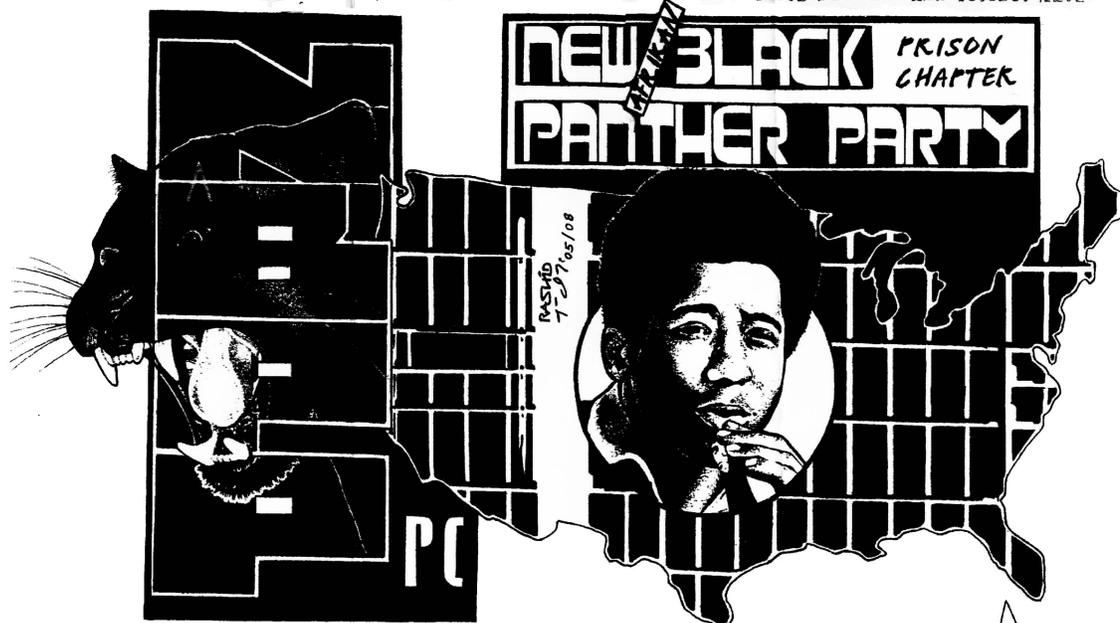


The 13th Amendment to the Constitution declared that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."





"amerikkkan prisons have always borne a certain resemblance to Dachau and Buchenwald, places for the bad Blacks, Mexicans, Indians and poor whites. But the years have brought an increase in the percentage of Blacks for crimes that can clearly be traced to political-economic causes. There are still some Blacks here who consider themselves criminals - but not many. Believe me, with the time and incentive that these brothers and sisters have



to read, study, and think, you will find no class or category more embittered, desperate, or dedicated to the ultimate remedy - Revolution."

George Jackson



State Prison Spending

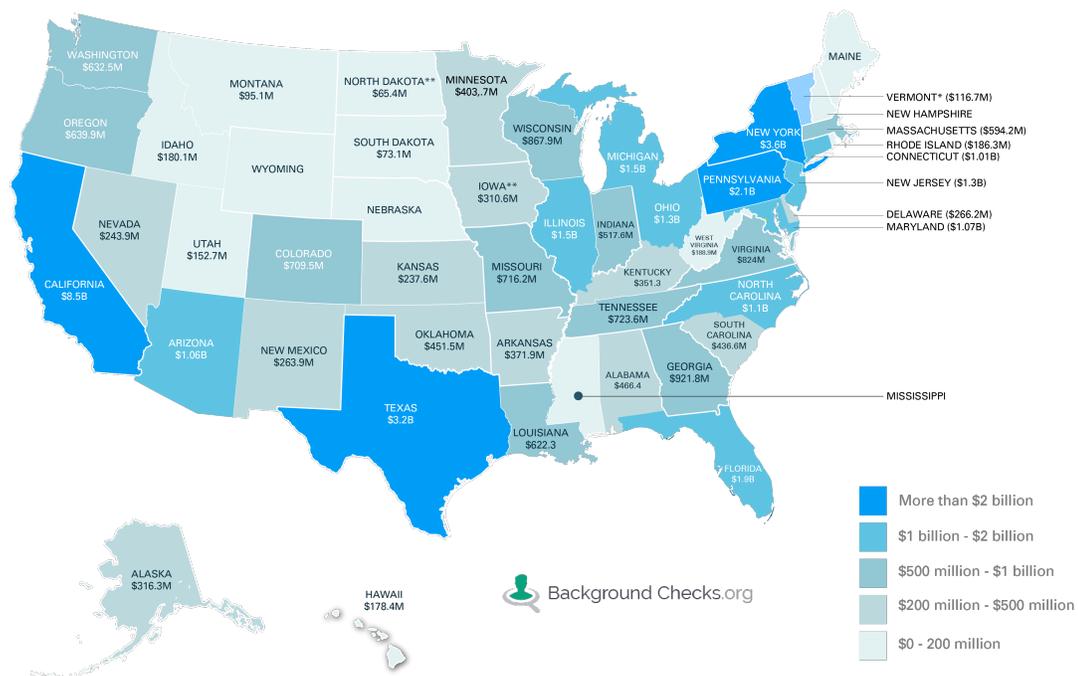
By Amani Sawari | Sawari Mi | www.backgroundchecks.org

August 19, 2017

It's no secret that the United States leads the world in imprisoning people. Perhaps it's our Puritan background, the war on drugs, or the endless list of criminal offenses on the books. Regardless, our passion for imprisonment knows no bounds.

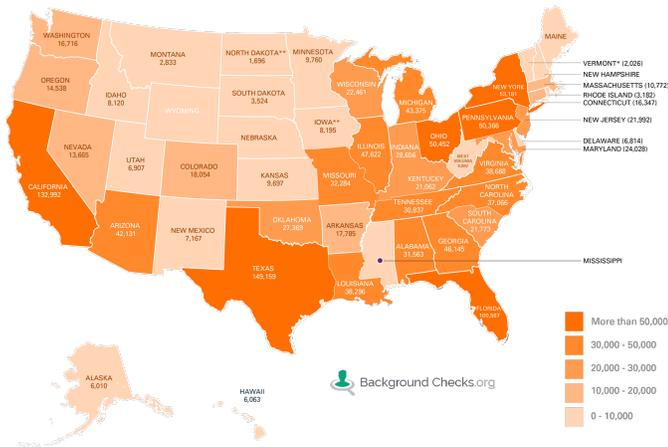
The majority of imprisoned people (both convicts and those jailed pending trial) happens on the state level. With that in mind, we set out to calculate exactly how much keeping all these people locked up costs each state and how much each household has to pay to keep all them in ball and chain. Our first job was simple: Find out how much each state spends on its prison system.

How much do states spend on prisons?

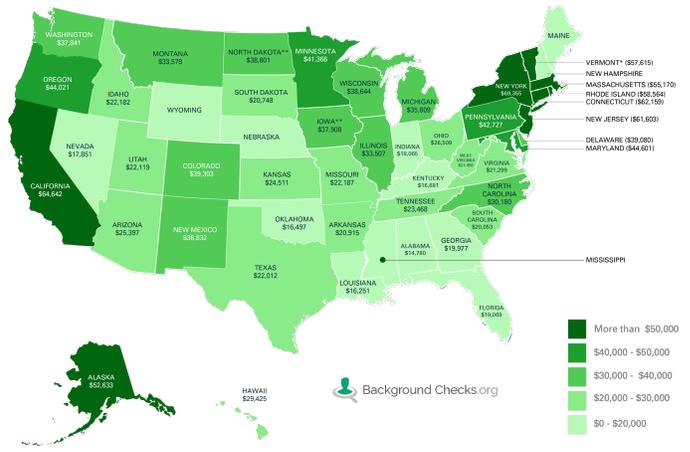


The problem with total budgets is that they don't tell the whole story. We wanted to know how much this was costing taxpayers in each state. Big numbers are nice and make great stories, but no single person in California is spending \$8 BILLION dollars. So we looked at the most recent population figures available from the U.S. Census, the number of prisons per state, and figured out the cost per inmate, per state.

What is the prison population per state?



What is the average cost per inmate, per state?



Data Sources and Notes

* The corrections systems in Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont have a unified structure, meaning that jails and prisons are operated by the state rather than the county and state jurisdictions, respectively. The figures provided by Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont include people in both sentenced and accused status, meaning that they include the cost of pretrial detention.

** Iowa, Kansas, and North Dakota did not provide dis-aggregated expenditure data.

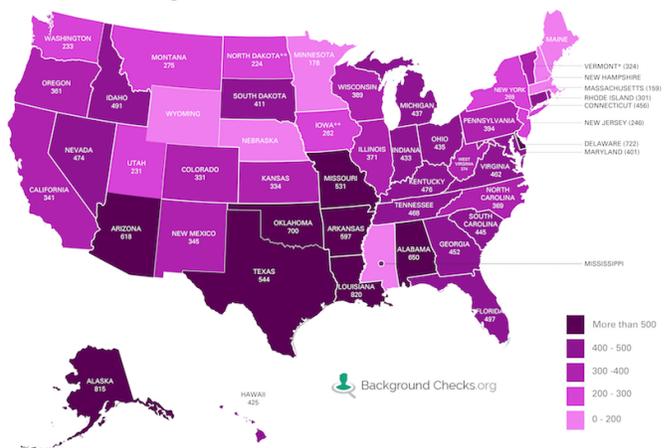
¹ “Other personnel services” includes pension contributions, retiree health care payments (often called OPEB), employee health insurance, and all other fringe benefits, such as FICA, workers’ compensation, life insurance, and any other personnel services expenditures, including those paid for by state agencies other than the department of corrections.

² “Payments to health care providers” includes payments to health care providers, hospitals, physicians, and for pharmaceuticals and payments for hospital care for incarcerated people. In states that provide direct health care services, the salaries and benefits for health care employees were included in the salary and other personnel services.

³ “All other” includes debt service and pay-as-you-go capital, payments for legal judgments and claims or contributions to the state tort fund, expenses related to the payment, administration, or oversight of private prisons, education and training for incarcerated people, and all other non-personnel services and other costs related to the confinement of adults from both the department of corrections and other state agencies.

The shares of total prison spending may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

What is the incarceration rate per state, per 100,000 residents?



We used data from state budgets, state expenditure reports, the US Department of Justice, state correctional agencies and departments, and the US Census.

Questions?

If you have questions, feel free to contact our research team – prisonresearch@backgroundchecks.org.

A19 Millions for Prisoners March in Washington D.C.

By Amani Sawari | Sawari Mi | www.opensawarimi.org

August 19, 2017

It's August 19th and I'm very pleased with the turnout of the Millions for Prisoners march as I write this on my flight back to Seattle from Washington D.C. It was October of last year when I got an unexpected direct message on twitter from an incarcerated individual who told me to get in touch with Millions for Prisoners (M4P). It just after I'd done a photo-protest in a small town called, Mukilteo where I'd stood out front of Starbucks, McDonalds, UPS, and other prison profiting companies holding up my handmade "End Prison Slavery" poster. After I'd posted the photos on twitter is when I was told to connect to M4P. I went to their webpage to fill out a contact form and before long I got a call from Krystal Rountree (the founder of IamWE and the organizer of M4P). She offered me the opportunity to collaborate with her on the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March by organizing out of Washington State as a local representative, before too long I'd also volunteered to assist with their monthly newsletter and weekly radio podcast, both called No Shackles. I found my place in the movement putting together the monthly newsletter: incorporating reader submissions from individuals on the inside while adding relevant articles to educate readers on the outside about the effects of mass incarceration. My focus for the newsletter was to write and collect articles that could engage readers on both sides of the wall in order to enable as many people as possible to participate in the prison abolition movement by staying informed about the Millions for Prisoners march and the many intersecting issues that are exasperated by the use of slavery in the United States. My desire for readers was to nurture their passion for prison abolition enough for them to want to attend their nearest A19 demonstration and to connect to others.

In July is when I received the request from Krystal to speak at the rally in Washington D.C. and I knew I couldn't miss the opportunity! Previously I'd been unsure on exactly which demonstration to attend, whether to go to one closer to me in California, travel across the country to D.C. or even whether to organize a march in Seattle, but after being invited to speak I knew I had to be in D.C. After debating on what to say I realized that it was the voice of the prisoners themselves that I wanted to amplify during the rally. I reached out to two brothers that I'd been connected to in the Michigan Department of Corrections, Chanton Miles and Lacino Hamilton, to ask what they'd like to be said. As a media scholar, I recognize the importance of representation and during the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights rally my desire was to allow the direct words of the prisoners to be represented through me, the prisoners' voices amplified during the prisoners' human rights rally. I felt honored to be able to use my voice to amplify the voices of those who are incarcerated. We must recognize that we can't end slavery without calling it out, today we called out slavery as a legal institution operating within the United States and we did so while standing in Lafayette Park, facing the White House in solidarity with sister



marches and demonstrations happening concurrently throughout the country, the largest of which occurring in Boston, where tensions led to a number protesters being arrested. I sat in Ronald Reagan airport waiting for my flight watching the news coverage in Boston, something that had been lacking for us in D.C. as no major news outlets were present.

Mainstream Media Avoids M4P

The media's avoiding our march reminded me of how dramatically the climate of this country has changed over the past year. Especially recently, after the violent incident that occurred in Charleston. Sadly, incidents of racial violence are ordinary these days but although some were disturbed by the acts of violence that occurred in Charleston, many were much more outraged by the President's dismissal, and even excuse, of the gross racial violence, placing blame on "both sides". Speakers at the march responded to the President saying, "We have the right to self-defense" because an action of self-defense is expected when in the face of racially hate driven violence. White supremacists were armed with guns in a way that Black activists would never be allowed and White Supremacists were protected by the police in a way that Black activists never are. In addition to spreading hate under the cloak of 'free speech' White supremacists targeted our day of resistance, August 19th, by organizing a 'Freedom rally' in D.C. at the same time as the M4P event. Black August is a traditional month of resistance against state forces, therefore the planning of the M4P event honored this and was planned starting in the prisons over a year in advance. It wasn't until a few weeks before the march that we noticed on social media the distribution of flyers for a Freedom Rally and we recognized this as a direct attack, an 'all lives matter' like response to our request to be heard on our day.

Even then, I wasn't entirely upset by the fact that this rally was happening at the same time until I got a call from Chanton, who'd written the speech, "I wish they'd cover the Prisoners' Human Rights March, all I see on TV is this freedom rally" I noted the fact that there weren't any big media outlets at our event, and that didn't bother me until I heard from Chanton because I knew he was unable to see our live social media feeds, he depended (not by choice) on mainstream media for his news consumption and of course the media failed him and every other person watching unable to see our demonstration. Mainstream media did not choose us to broadcast, it never does because we have no ownership over any mainstream media outlets, we're either grossly under or mis-represented. This is one of the reasons why I chose to produce media, to have the power to express my own narrative in a engaging and honest way. Although Chanton let me know that the march was not being televised, because mainstream media chose to broadcast a Freedom rally, it was great to have a moment to debrief with him about how the speech went and how well it was received by the crowd in D.C. He informed me that he recently got out of the hole (solitary confinement) and his writing work had been confiscated without reason. I had yet to hear from Lacino, still in the hole, since he sent me the first draft of his speech July 11th. It saddens me to see that these brave men's willingness to share their non-violent, motivating and inspiring words at this event led to such harsh consequences. Their words stirred up the crowd, "Today we're not marching asking for anything, we're demanding Congress to remove this stark form of disrespect for human life. The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution is a reminder that Americas slave and racist origin is alive and striving in Americas police, court and prison systems. Can systems that are intimately related to slavery and White Supremacy lay claim to the principals of Freedom and Democracy?" Of course we



cannot continue to operate within a slavery based criminal justice system and continue to cloak it under the banner of ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’. This is not only hypocritical, but dangerously misleading. The refusal to address the hypocrisy of these issues is intentional and we must not continue to allow it which is why this event was worth my first trip to Washington D.C.

Meeting Other Like Minds

Although I’d never yet been to D.C. as soon as I got Lafayette Square I immediately recognized my people crowded underneath the shade of large trees facing a tented stage. Excited to meet the organizers that I’d been collaborating with remotely for over a year I immediately recognized Mallah-Divine who sent me his book, [The Hidden Hand Duality of Self](#), during the first few months that we met online. He



led me to the lead organizer, Krystal Rountree who was wearing a shirt for the march that I should’ve purchased online when I had the chance. To be able to meet the people that have been carrying this event, breathed new life into my passion for social justice and human rights. It can be isolating to be an activist, as you become more passionate about your cause (refusing to engage with companies that profit from prison labor) you realize the difference in people who don’t share your passion. Social Media gave me the opportunity to connect with activists across the country who are as on fire as I am about prison abolition. I feel honored to be able to stand along side such hard working, inspirational and well-known individuals in the movement. That was the beautiful thing about my being able to go to D.C., I got to meet and network with the most influential leaders of M4P committee. In D.C. met other people who were willing to drive and fly across the country to stand for Prisoners’ human rights and formed connections that would not have been formed otherwise. Those are my kind of people, the ones who go

out of the way, regardless of inconvenience or obstacle in order to embrace the struggle and push forward.

There is a common understanding among those present at today’s march that when we cage, torture and degrade people as a form of punishment, we dehumanize not only those that are suffering under those conditions (the prisoners, their families) but we also dehumanize ourselves (police, corrections officers, bystanders). We must recognize that human rights are natural rights given to every one of us regardless of our standing in society, the speech I read emphasized this, “Human rights are not a privilege bestowed upon individuals due to good behavior and conduct. And they’re not limited to policies and laws enforced by bureaucratic government officials and administrators.” The unequal distribution and regulation of human rights by government officials is not only inhumane, it is barbaric.





We call for an end to this through the amending of the 13th, but we also know changing legislation wording alone is not the answer. #AbolishThe13th or #AmendThe13th is a slogan used to mobilize people through social media platforms. This phrase allows us to educate and make people aware about the fact that slavery exists. The majority of Americans are unaware of legalized slavery which is why our focus is on the people, the collective and not the government. The representatives of

Congress knew the loophole that they threw in when they wrote the 13th. It was written to preserve slavery, not to end it because of this “We shouldn’t necessarily be marching to change and educate the government. We should be marching to change and educate the people.” It’s the masses who are unaware of the need for change, and it’s the masses who we must require to change their mindset and engage in this fight in order for us to force the government into making the changes necessary to liberate our people. “The real leap forward does not consist of some symbolic Congressional measure, but in the people accepting the challenge of embracing the struggle and surmounting obstacles.” It’s the masses who have to recognize the need for change AND be agitated enough to demand change. We become agitated by police brutality, mass incarceration, the prison-industrial complex and the public school-to-prison pipeline enough to share posts on social media, making videos of police killings go viral but the vast majority of us don’t go past that in our action against this well constructed Black genocidal, criminal justice system. Some of us become agitated enough to attend a demonstration, we may even make a sign or buy a T-shirt, but we usually we stop there. What happens after the hashtag to viral video to street protest cycle?

Just another killing or another brutal, unjust arrest (if you’re lucky) and then the cycle continues...

Breaking the Cycle

National outrage leading to a popular hashtag causing the spread of a viral video resulting in a street protest (no matter how large) isn’t enough to evoke change. Obviously our government can handle that, suppressing our protests with police force, because these incidents of violence and the exponential growth of mass incarceration continues. Speakers at the rally reminded us that every 12 hours a black person is killed by state forces and this is a rate of genocide. 1 out of every 3 Black men is under state supervision (in prison, parole, etc) and this direct attack on the men in our community is destroying our family structures and depriving generations of young men from learning how to become adequate fathers and husbands. This is an intentional method of the government used to destroy our community and it’s working because our response to these trends by hash-tagging and sharing videos is not working. I too was stuck in that cycle, wondering why if sooooo many people are outraged online and some in the streets then how can this keep happening? If millions of people around the world are seeing so many police killings of Blacks on video then how can this keep happening? I think we all find ourselves asking those same questions, but it doesn’t take more than a simple conversation with a more experienced activist (for me it was a prisoner) to realize that there is more to the formula of evoking change than social media and street protest, we must also engage in networking and organizing. One of the best parts about attending events centered around social justice is having the opportunity to network directly with others that are like-minded. I left the event feeling lighter and heavier, lighter in a sense that this event culminated months of hard work, but heavy with the responsibility to continue forward. The fact that we were able to



organize events in solidarity across the county in protest of legalized slavery is a great success because our willingness to come together and organize has been lacking in the Black community since the aggressive destruction of the BPP, but we can no longer continue to be afraid. There were BPP members in attendance at this rally, urging us not to give up on those political prisoners still fighting on the inside, now elders with medical issues being neglected by corrections officers who are desperately in need of our support.

We can support each other much better by expanding our thinking when it comes to what activism looks like. One huge mistake that people continue to make is thinking that attending a march is activism. While attending a march allows you to engage with an activity but it doesn't make one an activist, it opens a door. When we go to these events we're able to gather, support each other, meet others sharing our struggle, share stories and talk about our ideas. If you can go to a march and then go home and never contact one person you met at the event then what's the point? There's no way that you



can be an activist because there's no activity there. If you can attend a march without exchanging information with new people that you hope to collaborate with in order to make strides forward then how could you be active? Ending slavery, an institution that our government has consistently upheld and depended on throughout generations of torture and abuse, is going to take a very large group of very active people who are consistent and demanding. There *is* a formula I follow when I go to marches and I'll share it with you, C^4, not only does this help guide my thinking during fast paced events like marches and rallies, following the steps also allow me to grow my network and get more work to do for the movement because as an activists there's never enough work to do:

1. **CONNECT** I challenge every person who goes to a demonstration to leave with at least 5 new contacts from people with intersecting interests or identities. Always keep a small notebook with you in order to write down any inspirational quotes or jot down contact information. Connecting with someone can be as simple as getting their email or social media handle.
2. **COMMUNICATE** What's the point of getting someone's contact info if you never reach out? I urge those of you who were able to connect to open up a line of communication by reaching out to those contacts (regardless of their location) and letting them know more about your work and your passion. This should be done in a timely manner (within a week of your meeting) allowing people from different states/organizations to keep in touch with the intention of expanding our collective sphere of influence.
3. **CREATE & COLLABORATE** This is the most important step and where a lot of people fall short. Once you communicate with those contacts, you must actively look for a way to collaborate with them. What's the point in opening up a line of communication if you never work together? Be creative, find ways to collaborate that you've never seen before that can grab the attention of people who've never heard of your cause or what you do. Even if you can't plan some extravagant event, create a new branch of an organization or start a new business venture with your contacts; collaborating can be as simple as a tweet like, "So glad to have connected with @MallahFitness at the @mili4p human rights march #A19 #EndPrisonSlavery." A simple



tweet like this introduces all of your followers to this new contact you've made and vice-versa giving both parties access to a new sphere of influence.

4. CONTINUE with CONSISTENCY There will be some organizations and individuals that are easier for you to collaborate with than others. Don't feel bad if you're able to work together to plan an event with one individual or organization and not another. As a writer its easier for me to work with different organizations by attending the events they host and writing about them than it is for me to organize an event. If you're a photographer it may be easier for to collaborate with a writer, allowing them to use your photos for an article. If you're the founder of an organization it may be easier for you to collaborate with an individual interested in starting a new branch of your organization in another state, than it would be for you to work with a book author for example. But I'm sure that we all can find a way to work with anyone, we're creative enough. For example, the organization founder could collaborate with the book author to host an event featuring their books. The fact that you were able to find another person with similar interests at an event for a cause both parties are passionate about is overwhelming evidence of your potential to work together. After working together successfully, do it again because this if the type of consistent collaborating that is essential to relationship building.

As a result of our constantly connecting and collaborating with each other our collective following will increase and growth will happen. A lot of people are unwilling to beyond 'showing up' at a demonstration. Although showing up is a VERY important 1st step, it's not the solution to change. This will not be the last march, rally, demonstration, Black August or A19 so we must all be ready when the time comes for us to stand together and demand our rights for our people. Prisoners' rights are human rights and this country wide demonstration is only the beginning. Once I get off of this plane I have to reach out to my contacts and look for ways to collaborate with the like-minded individuals I met at the march so that the rippling effect of what began in D.C. will continue.

A thank you to ALL of the organizers who put this beautiful event together against the odds, with the obstacle of opposing forces.

A thank you to ALL of those who were able to hear me speak in Washington D.C. today.

A special thank you to my father who accompanied me to the rally and stood in the blistering heat sweating profusely in order to get the perfect angle of me speaking.

In the future we can be sure that, not only will more people know about the next demonstration because it'll be spread widely across multiple platforms in creative ways that the masses cannot ignore, but now more people will also know exactly what to do in order to keep the ball rolling after the event is over: Connect, Communicate, Collaborate and Continue resulting in increased unity and exponential growth within our community.



Solidarity in San José with Millions for Prisoners March in D.C.

By Bradley Allen | Indy Bay | <http://indybay.org>
August 21, 2017

Created to honor the deaths of George and Jonathan Jackson—freedom fighters who were killed by authorities in the early 70s—Black August holds a long tradition and legacy of resistance.



[Prisoner solidarity activists, including Troy, Nube, Raymond, Cole, Watani, Dorsey, and Julia, at the Millions for Prisoners march and rally in San José on August 19, 2017. These folks work everyday to amplify the voices of comrades trapped behind walls, to improve their living conditions, and to ultimately smash the cages.]

Text used for this article was originally written by The Fire Inside collective. Photos and the first two paragraphs are by Bradley Allen, reporting on the march and rally in San José, California on August 19, 2017 in solidarity with the Millions for Prisoners March in Washington DC. The iamWe Prison Advocacy Network organized the mobilization in DC, and reports there were over a dozen solidarity demonstrations on August 19. All photos and text are published in solidarity with prisoners, however they do not necessarily represent the views of the rally organizers and its wide range of participants.

Activists from throughout the Bay Area gathered at Raymond Bernal Jr. Memorial Park at 7th and Mission Streets in San José. At the park, an audio statement was broadcast from political prisoner Joka Heshima Jinsai, founder of "Amend The 13th: Abolish 'Legal' Slavery in Amerika Movement." From there, over one hundred people marched on the sidewalks through Northern California's largest city, and past a long row of bail bonds



storefronts. The demonstration featured a rally at James P. McEntee Plaza, next to Santa Clara County's notorious Main Jail, with passionate speakers from San José and surrounding communities, including Watani Stiner, Dorsey Nunn, Laurie Valdez, Troy Williams, Raymond Aguilar, Sean Ramsey, Cole Dorsey, and more.

Last fall anarchists and anti-capitalist radicals turned out in force across the country to show solidarity with the September 9th nationally coordinated prisoner strikes. Protests, noise demos, graffiti campaigns, street blockades, and attacks on those who benefit from prison (whether it be politician's offices or profiteers) characterized the solidarity with the strikes.

This year, prisoners are again taking action and again calling for outside support. The call and the messaging around it are different, but the overarching purpose — linking outside support with prisoner resistance to erode the grip of white supremacy and capitalism — is the same.

Why August 19th? Why a March on Washington?

August 19th is a Saturday in the middle of Black August. Every year for decades Black radical prisoners and liberationists have identified August as a month for organized resistance and commemoration. Created to honor the deaths of George and Jonathan Jackson—freedom fighters who were killed by authorities in the early 70s—Black August holds a long tradition and legacy of resistance. Since its inception, historians and radicals have linked the month to many examples of oppression and resistance: everything from the Move Bombing and the Watts Rebellion to the Haitian revolution and the first arrival of enslaved Afrikans in Jamestown, VA occurred in the month of August.

Last year prisoners and allies chose the 45th anniversary of the Attica Rebellion as the date to kick off the strike in part because September 9th is recognized and honored by all prisoners, Black, Brown and White. The goal was unified participation and speaking to issues that affect all prisoners. This year, the choice of August 19th foregrounds Black prisoner organizing and focuses the action more emphatically on prison as a white supremacist structure.

The Millions For Prisoners March on Washington also resonates with Black resistance traditions, starting with the historic 1963 March on Washington (which also occurred in August). Many anarchists and radicals see marches, and specifically marches on Washington as appeals to existing power structures, and reject them, preferring to create and expand their own power. For the organizers of August 19th, demands and marches on Washington are demonstrations of power and solidarity.

Last year the call to action focused on direct action resistance at the site of exploitation, the prisons, which was very inspiring to anarchists and outside supporters. Jailhouse Lawyers Speak heard about and joined the September 9th organizing effort late summer of last year, and yet they held down some of the longest work stoppage and resistance in the country. The Millions for Prisoners March is a project they've been working toward for years, and the demonstrations of outside solidarity last September affirmed that this is the year for the March.

Report Backs from prisoners on September 9th that were compiled for The Fire Inside make it clear there's a powerful feedback loop between prisoners' actions that inspire outside solidarity, which gains media attention, and in turn empowers prisoners to act, because they know they are not alone and that their resistance (and the inevitable repression that follows) will not go unseen. The August 19 Millions for Prisoners March puts the onus on outside demonstrations of support. A large turnout of solidarity on the outside helps to inspire direct action resistance on the inside.

Prisoners in Texas have already gone public with intentions to strike following August 19th, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists have passed a resolution supporting the strike and prisoner organizing. Florida officials are using the Millions for Prisoners March as justification to indefinitely lock down all state facilities and to ramp up the domination by denying prisoners their scheduled visits and their educational, vocational, and ministry programming, along with their recreation. This enhanced repression of nearly 97,000 state prisoners illuminates the states' fear of the power they try to cage and subdue, while compelling outside supporters to pressure the state to release its tyrannical grip.

Following the horrific display of white terror in Charlottesville that claimed a life and injured many more, anarchist resistance must continue its fight against white supremacy, including the push to abolish prison and



carceral control. Antifascist and antiracist efforts take many forms, from confronting white nationalists in the streets to challenging the new slaveholders in the U.S. who operate and fund the world’s largest caging system. <https://bradleyallen.net/>

IMAGES FROM SAN JOSÉ:







America must do more to help family members of incarcerated

By Tiffany McFadden | USA Today | <http://usatoday.com/>
August 25, 2017

The state of New York scattered my sister, my three brothers and me to what seemed like the four corners of the earth when my mother went to prison. Incarceration has been a family affliction — my mother followed in her mother's footsteps, and my brother Sequan Prude followed her. Mom struggles to this day to bring us together.

Ours is like hundreds of thousands of families across the nation. More than half of the people who are [incarcerated have children](#) under the age of 18, including more than 120,000 mothers and 1.1 million fathers. Two-thirds of these parents are serving time for non-violent offenses.

When America talks about the criminal justice system, the families of incarcerated people are rarely considered or mentioned. When we are, we're made to feel shame or guilt. But you rarely hear about how the children, parents and siblings of incarcerated people are harmed.

Forced into the system

I was 4 years old when I was removed from my mother's custody, but she had been cycling through the criminal justice system since I was born. I went to stay with my Aunt Pattie, the sister of the man believed to be my father. Aunt Pattie held judgments about my mom's ability to parent. Consequently, I went for years without hearing my mother's voice. Not seeing or speaking with my mother had a profound impact on me — and I resented my aunt and acted out. By the time I was 11, my rebellious nature proved too much for Aunt Pattie, and she turned me over to the custody of New York state.

And so my entanglement with the foster care system began.

I spent four years with a family in Brownsville, N.Y. Perhaps because the husband had himself served time in prison before finding God through Pentecostalism, the couple understood the importance of a mother in her child's life. They made sure I visited my mom in prison and spoke with her on the phone — after years of being without her.

Eventually, I ended up in the home of a woman who was committed to making sure I had a strong sense of myself as a black woman. A recovering addict, she understood the criminal justice system firsthand and tried to provide the support I needed in my life. She had a vast library of books, and on the first day I arrived in her



home, I was told to choose one. I picked Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the story of a black slave mother making heartbreaking choices to keep her family together. It was the first time I saw my shattered family experience through the lens of racial justice. Its message pushes me to this day.



Tiffany McFadden (Photo: Handout)

My teenage years and early 20s were riddled with instability, but I eventually found a stable home and a steady job. In 2008, when I was 24, I got my GED. In 2012, I earned my bachelor's in English from City College of New York. I have worked hard for a master's in social work from Hunter College. My story has a happy ending. Unfortunately, my brother Sequan has not fared as well.

The abuse of incarcerated people at the hands of guards frequently goes unnoticed and unpunished. But Sequan was beaten so badly by Rikers Island corrections officers that the abusers went to trial.

Sequan has been caught up in the criminal justice system and struggled to find his way out of it ever since. I believe that the separation from our mother and all that Sequan experienced during his own foster care journey led him down the path to prison.

Families struggle with mental health issues

The fact is that family members of the incarcerated suffer a lot. Families have reported a variety of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress, according to a 2015 report by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Forward Together and Research Action Design. About half of the family members attributed a health issue to their loved one's incarceration. That takes a toll on communities.

Today, I help families deal with the collateral damage of having an incarcerated family member by advocating for services for the families of incarcerated people. I'm also the lead organizer of a 19-day march of these families, from New York City to Albany. The March for Justice is a collective effort by family members, formerly incarcerated people and a host of other concerned community members that will step off in Harlem on Saturday to shine a light on the abuses in prisons and to advocate for supporting family relationships. I'll be marching alongside a mother who has a 20-year-old son with mental health problems at Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie, N.Y. She says he was placed in solitary confinement for 45 days without any explanation. We have found no record, no citation that states a reason for putting a young man with mental health issues in conditions that cause mental disease in healthy people.

Before being put in solitary confinement, her son told her that the guards had been taunting him. In prison, the sharp edges of soda cans have been used by incarcerated people to slit their own wrists. This woman's son said a guard or guards repeatedly held a can up to the bars of his cell, the subtext being that a guard could cut him and say he did it himself.

I'm marching for her son. I'm marching for Sequan, who was beaten within an inch of his life. I'm marching for the countless children, parents, brothers and sisters in families ripped apart by the criminal justice system. I'm marching so our voices will be heard and the criminal justice system will be improved.

We need our leaders to stop the systemic abuse of people on both sides of the bars. Who's with me?

Tiffany McFadden was a ward of New York state (Office of Children and Family Services — [OCFS](#)) for 17 years. She is the project director of the CUNY-HRA (Human Resource Administration) Initiative — CUNY Research Foundation. Tiffany is also the logistical lead for the March for Justice and a volunteer for the Alliance of Families for Justice.



Organized Sister Marches in Solidarity

Main March:

LOCATION: Lafayette Square, Washington, D.C.
TIME: 11:30PM – 5:00PM
ORGANIZER(S): iamWE Prison Advocacy Network

Sister Marches:

LOCATION: Asheville, North Carolina
TIME: 11:30 AM
ORGANIZER(S): Brit L. Castañeda, Jake Swett & Yeye Siju Osunyemi

March on Montgomery

LOCATION: Alabama State Capitol Tours in Montgomery, Alabama
TIME: 12:00PM – 6:00PM
ORGANIZER(S): Unheard Voices OTCJ

LOCATION: Franklin CI in Carrabelle, Florida
TIME: 1:00PM – 4:00PM
ORGANIZER(S): Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons

LOCATION: San Jose, California
TIME: 12:00PM – 5:00PM
ORGANIZER(S): California Prison Focus

LOCATION: Riverside, California
TIME: 12:00PM – 5:00PM
ORGANIZER(S): Robert Presley Detention Ctr.

Virtual March: This virtual march is primarily for those who identify as prisoners and or disabled to upload (or send) posts, as the mission of this virtual march is to highlight the intersection between incarceration and disability. For example, we acknowledge many forms of imprisonment (e.g. disabled people may be incarcerated in prisons, nursing homes, psychiatric facilities etc.) and also that the school-to-prison pipeline flows right through special education services. However, we also welcome stories from family members and especially children of those affected. Link to join:

<http://millionsforprisonersvm.com/index.php/join-the-virtual-march/>

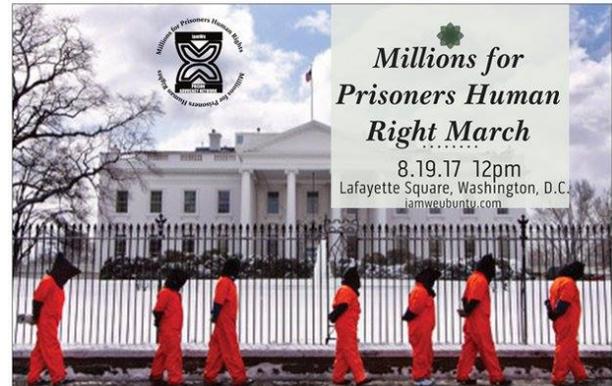
Social Media:

Millions for Prisoners uses Social Media as a tool for connecting activists, advocates, prisoners, ex-prisoners, their family and friends. Here's where you can find our official pages:

Twitter @milli4prisoners

Facebook @ Millions for Prisoners March on Washington

Circulate the following hashtags as you publicize your events so that we can find each other and spread awareness on social media: #Abolishthe13th, #EndPrisonSlavery, #RiseUp, #DCProtests, #BlackAugust, #M4P, #M4P(your city) ex. #M4PSeattle

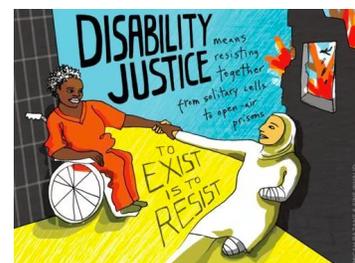


U.V. Unheard Voices
The New Underground Railroad
Millions for Prisoners
Human Rights March
Saturday, August 19 at 12 PM
Montgomery, Alabama

UnHeard Voices O.T.C.J. is a Family & Children Advocacy Group started by Confined Citizens and their Family & Friends. They Advocate for Parental Visitations, and Parole and provide Supportive Services to Families and Children who have loved ones behind bars.

SPONSORED BY:
Unheard Voices O.T.C.J.
The Free Alabama Movement
Free Ohio Movement
Free Mississippi Movement United
The New Underground Railroad
Mothers and Families
T.O.P.S. & FAM Queen Team

For more information, please contact:
903-309-0813 or
Unheardvoices78@gmail.com
#abolish13



Millions for Prisoners March

Mission Statement

WE SEEK TO UNITE ACTIVISTS, ADVOCATES, PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS, THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AS WELL AS ALL OTHERS COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PRISONS AND THE PRISON SYSTEM, AND REPLACE THEM WITH MORE HUMANE AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS. OUR AIM IS TO EXPOSE THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION THAT IT TRULY IS. WE WANT TO CHALLENGE THE IDEA THAT CAGING AND CONTROLLING PEOPLE KEEPS COMMUNITIES SAFE. WE BELIEVE THAT FOR TOO LONG OUR NATION HAS RELIED UPON INCARCERATION AS A WAY TO SOLVE BROADER SOCIAL PROBLEMS, TO ITS DETRIMENT. IN AUGUST OF 2017, WE WILL MARCH ON WASHINGTON TO BRING WORLD ATTENTION TO THE CONTINUED SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE IN AMERICA, ENABLED BY THE 13TH AMENDMENT AND TO HIGHLIGHT THE EVER INCREASING MOVEMENT AGAINST THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

Getting Involved

The Millions for Prisoners March is a grassroots movement dependent on community investment and local organizing. We urge readers to personally take up this human rights cause by getting involved in a variety of ways including creating flyers, making videos, sharing hashtags such as #Abolishthe13th or #EndPrisonSlavery, as well as sharing Millions for Prisoners Facebook pages in order to raise awareness through social media. These are some small steps individuals can take to inform their community. We also encourage participants to spread their impact by organizing their community to mobilize to Washington D.C. For those who are unable to travel to D.C. we are ask that communities host solidarity demonstrations on the August 19th. This is a grassroots movement so we are truly relying on the people to make this happen. Below is information on how to form a local organizing committee.

Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

The Local organizing committees shall be comprised of various individuals and organizations situated in local communities throughout the country. The LOCs will provide direct interaction with members of its local community as it relates to the promotion, organization and mobilization for the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March. The LOC will engage members of the local community, and provide education on the impacts of the 13th amendment of the U.S constitutions and other laws that contribute to mass incarceration in their communities.

Requirements:

1. Minimum of 3 participants to form a LOC- 1 member being the Local Representative
2. All participants must be in agreement to raise awareness and push the Millions for Prisoner Human Rights March agenda. Participants are responsible for connecting with organizations and recruiting new members

Submission Info: In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the march and providing updates on demonstration progress, the No Shackles Newsletter also accepts work from prisoners in the form of articles, art and poetry. This March is about you and some of our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. We also accept submissions from friends and family members of prisoners. For readers interested in submitting their work: typed and printed can be sent to the return address or emailed to



Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners

1. All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.
 2. There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
 3. It is, however, desirable to respect the religious beliefs and cultural precepts of the group to which prisoners belong, whenever local conditions so require.
 4. The responsibility of prisons for the custody of prisoners and for the protection of society against crime shall be discharged in keeping with a State's other social objectives and its fundamental responsibilities for promoting the well-being and development of all members of society.
 5. Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and
- Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants.
6. All prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality.
 7. Efforts addressed to the abolition of solitary confinement as a punishment, or to the restriction of its use, should be undertaken and encouraged.
 8. Conditions shall be created enabling prisoners to undertake meaningful remunerated employment which will facilitate their reintegration into the country's labor market and permit them to contribute to their own financial support and to that of their families.
 9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.
 10. With the participation and help of the community and social institutions, and with due regard to the interests of victims, favorable conditions shall be created for the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into society under the best possible conditions.
 11. The above Principles shall be applied impartially.

iamWE Prison Advocacy Network
P.O. Box 58201
Raleigh NC 27658

