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THE NEW PRISON MOVEMENT

THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO ABOLISH SLAVERY IN AMERIKA (2018)

By Kevin “Rashid “ Johnson

The Rising Prison Movement

Across Amerika (home of the world’s largest prison population) growing numbers of the imprisoned are coming to realize that they are victims of social injustice.

Foremost, as victims of an inherently predatory and dysfunctional capitalist-imperialist system, which targets the poor and people of color for intensified policing, militaristic containment, and selective criminal prosecutions. While denying them access to the basic resources, employment and institutional control needed for social and economic security. Deprivations which generate “crime”: economic crimes, crimes of passion, and crimes of attempting to cope (through drug use and addictions).

Secondly, once imprisoned they become victims of inhumane abuses, warehousing, and one of the most decadent and dehumanizing forms of social economic injustice: slavery.

This rising awareness among the impris-

oned has prompted increasing numbers of prisoners to unite in resistance proclaiming “no more!” And the momentum is building.

This “new” Prison Movement is seeing growing waves of open resistance to slave labor and conditions of abuse, which is eroding the structures put in place beginning nearly 50 years ago to repress the Prison Movement of that era, such as solitary confinement.

From Yesterday’s Suppressed Prison Movement

During the earlier wave of the Prison Movement (of the 1960s-70s), when the courts barred their doors against prisoners’ lawsuits seeking redress against the inhumane conditions that pervade U.S. prisons, the prisoners rose up in resistance.

In a dialectical relationship their movement both informed and was informed by revolutionary ideas then prevalent in the broader social movements of the time, which exposed and challenged the capitalist system. At the forefront of that movement was the original Black Panther Party and allied groups on the outside and Comrades like George Jackson who formed the BPP’s first prison chapter on the inside.

To suppress that movement and stamp out its revolutionary consciousness, the Establishment began constructing and operating solitary confinement prisons and units (called Supermaxes and Control Units) at an unprecedented level. Beginning with the Marion Control Unit which opened in 1972, after the assassination of George Jackson by guards, and the peaceful 1971 uprising at Attica State Prison that officials suppressed by murdering 29 prisoners and

10 civilians, then tortured hundreds more, sparking international outrage and exposure of the inhumane conditions in U.S. prisons.

In a rare admission of the actual political purpose of subsequent high security units, Ralph Arons, a former warden at Marion, testified in federal court: “The purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in prison and society at large.”[1]

Alongside this repression also came concessions to the Prison Movement, including prison officials granting prisoners more privileges and the federal courts opening their doors to prisoner litigations challenging their living conditions. But this did not last.

As the U.S. prison system expanded eight-fold and solitary confinement units contained prisoner resistance the concessions were rolled back and the courts soon made rulings like *Turner v. Safley*[2] and laws like the *Prison Litigation Reform Act*[3] were enacted, that in effect reinstated the courts’ old “hands off” doctrine towards prisoner lawsuits.

Oppression Breeds Renewed Resistance

With these reversals abuse conditions intensified especially with the vastly expanded use of solitary confinement, a condition which the U.S. Supreme Court found to be cruel and unusual and constituted torture back in the late 1800s,[4] and the attendant enlargement of prison labor pools to be exploited as free workers. Under these conditions of heightened abuse and exploitation a new Prison Movement has emerged and

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is only growing.

At each stage of this new movement record numbers of prisoners have joined and forged unity across racial and tribal lines that the system has traditionally been able to keep prisoners divided and controlled by. Even more monumental is unity in these struggles has been achieved not just within individual prisons, but across entire prison systems and now across the country, with public support spanning the country and reaching international levels.

This has and can only inspire greater levels of resistance and help us refine our forms of resistance, and methods of organizing and communication.

To these ends I'd like to summarize the major events in today's growing waves of prison resistance and call on readers to join and support the struggles to come.

And Resist We Have!

When in 2008 a migrant Jesus Manuel Galindo was left to die in a solitary confinement cell from untreated epilepsy, hundreds of detainees at Reeves County Detention Complex in Pesos, TX took over the complex and put it to the torch. Over \$2 million in damage was reported in an uprising that united detainees from Cuba, Nigeria, Venezuela, and Mexico.

During December 2010, prisoners in six Georgia prisons went on a mass strike, protesting unpaid slave labor; solitary confinement, and other oppressive conditions. Latinos, Blacks, whites, prison tribes of all orientations, Muslims, etc. united in this protest. Following the week-long strike, two years later at Jackson State Prison, where many of the 2010 strike leaders were transferred to, a 44 day hunger strike was staged as guards violently retaliated.

In 2011 and 2013 three historical mass hunger strikes were undertaken by California prisoners protesting indefinite solitary confinement and other abuses, where 6,000, 12,000, and 30,000 prisoners respectively participated. Prisoners in other states also joined the strike – in Virginia, Oregon, Washington state, etc. This strike united and was led by Blacks, Latinos, and whites, and all the major California prison tribes. Which led to a call by the prisoners to end all racial and group hostilities, and which Cali prison officials have repeatedly tried to sabotage. This strike and unprecedented unity alongside legal challenges by some strike leaders and participants forced the Cali prison system to reform its long

term solitary confinement policies and release some 2,000 prisoners to general population in 2015.

Inspired by the 2010 GA prison strike, in 2013, prisoner leaders of the Free Alabama Movement (FAM) called for a strike in protest of Alabama's "running a slave empire" and "incarcerating people for free labor". In January 2014, prisoners at four Alabama prisons took up the strike. As a result of FAM's organizing efforts and collaborating with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a committee within the IWW was formed called the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), which now has over 800 imprisoned members in 46 states. The IWOC has since played an important support role in subsequent strikes and building public support. Shortly after the IWOC's founding, the IWOC and the New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter united as allies in this work, and I as a co-founder of the NABPP and numerous other NABPP members joined IWOC. [5]

In 2014, all 1200 detainees at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, went on a 56 day hunger strike, which spread to the Joe Corley Detention Center in Conroe, Texas, all protesting oppressive conditions at the facilities. Outside protesters organized in support of the strikers.

At each stage of this new movement record numbers of prisoners have joined and forged unity across racial and tribal lines....

In April 2016, prisoners in seven Texas prisons went on a work strike at the call of leading comrades of the NABPP's TX branch and IWOC. The month before a spontaneous uprising took place in Alabama at Holman prison, where the new warden, Carter Davenport, known for his role in physical assaults on prisoners, ended up on the receiving end of violence.

These initiatives in early 2016 inspired a call to prisoners across the U.S. to engage in a county-wide strike beginning on September 9, 2016, a date chosen to commemorate the 1971 Attica uprising.

September 9th proved historical as over 30,000 prisoners in up to 46 facilities in 24 states took up various forms of protest from refusing to work, to hunger strikes, to prison takeovers, to disrupting operations.

Outside protests took place in various cities across the U.S. in support of the prisoners.

In response to the rising voices of prisoners resisting slave labor and abusive treatment, on August 19, 2017, a March on Washington was undertaken in support of prisoners and against the 13th Amendment which, enacted at the end of the Civil War in 1865, legalized enslavement of the criminally convicted, in violation of international law written and ratified by the U.S. after World War 2, which forbids all forms of slavery and involuntary servitude.[6]

Shaken by the protests of September 2016, in an unprecedented move states like Florida locked down their entire prison system hoping to head off any possible uprisings attending the August 19, 2017, Washington March. Florida went even further to serve its prisoners special gourmet meals during the entire four day lockdown (from August 18-21).

Despite this move Florida prisoners made an end run around officials and still undertook a strike codenamed Operation PUSH, beginning February 12, 2018, on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. PUSH involved prisoners across the state refusing to turn out for work and boycotting the prison commissary. They were protesting unpaid slave labor, price-gouging in the system's commissary and packaging services, the gain-time scam that replaced parole, compounded by extreme overcrowding caused by extreme sentencing, causing inhumane conditions.

As Florida prison officials scrambled to replace men who refused to work with more compliant ones and transferred and carted off strike participants to solitary confinement, they falsely reported to the media that no strike and no retribution against participants occurred. An outright lie.

As one of Operation PUSH's main outside supporters informed me in a letter during latter January 2018:

"I am receiving mail daily from prisoners all over FL who are either participating in Push or being retaliated against for having literature or correspondence with outside organizations that support the strike, such as IWOC and FTP. Some have been outright threatened with punishments if they continue to talk to us ... There was only 6 weeks of planning and it was covered by 50 news outlets including Newsweek, The Nation, Teen Vogue! I think we're off to a good start and the DOC is lying that no one is participating."

Not only this but I can bear witness to

Florida officials' lying about there being no strike nor reprisals, because I also participated.

On the eve of the strike the warden at Florida State Prison (FSP) had me and nearly a dozen others with whom I was known to socialize split up, which we'd anticipated. This did nothing to prevent our planned boycott of the commissary for several weeks. In fact it allowed us to spread the word.

Then on January 10th the warden had me charged with a disciplinary report for inciting FL prisoners to riot, in retaliation for me writing an article explaining the strikes purpose and the prisoners' need of public support that was published online.[7] After a prompt kangaroo hearing and conviction of the infraction I was put in an unheated cell with a broken window as outside temperatures dipped into the 20s, and guards kept exhaust fans on 24/7 sucking the freezing air into the cell.[8]

Yet another call went out, initiated by any NABPP's Comrade Malik for a renewed round of strikes across the U.S. to begin on Juneteenth (June 19, 2018). As I and several dozen prisoners at Florida's Santa Rosa prison where I was then confined prepared a commissary boycott for this strike, and undertook to build unity among the prisoners there in solitary (to counter the culture of guard-manipulated violence between them), I was abruptly interstate transferred back to my home state of Virginia and promptly assigned to a permanent solitary confinement status called Intensive Management.

The Struggle Continues

But the struggle doesn't end there. A broad call has gone out for a sustained prison strike from August 21-September 9, 2018, for prisoners across the US. Participants are called on to participate in any, several, or all of the following manners:

1. Work strikes: prisoners will not report to assigned jobs. Each place of detention will determine how long its strike will last. Some of these strikes may translate into a local list of demands designed to improve conditions and reduce harm within the prison.
2. Sit-ins: In certain prisons, people will engage in peaceful sit-in protests.
3. Boycotts: All spending should be halted. Those outside the walls are asked to not make financial judgments for those on the inside. People on the inside will in-

form you if they are participating in this boycott.

4. Hunger strikes: People shall refuse to eat.

The strike will raise the following 10 general demands:

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

Conclusion

Slavery and oppressive "containment" of the marginalized and poor never ended in Amerika. The 13th Amendment was passed as a compromise to previous slave owners whereby they could continue to exploit the labor of disempowered people, but now free of the burden of paying for their up-

keep. This was done at taxpayers' expense.

This oppressive dynamic must continue to be resisted as must the inhumane and dehumanizing conditions that attend imprisonment in Amerika. It was only by resistance that the slaves of the old antebellum slave system effectively countered the lies and logic of the ruling powers of that system erected by them to justify their institutions of slavery; it was only by unifying in that resistance and sabotage and ultimately fighting for their freedom, with the support of outside allies and comrades, that the slaves of the old South destroyed the system as it was.

But it was only reformed into the system of penal slavery that it is now. So we still have much work to do until slavery in Amerika is abolished once and for all. ●

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!

NOTES

[1] Quoted in Stephen Whitman, "The Marion Penitentiary – It Should be Opened-Up Not Locked Down," Southern Illinoisan, August 7, 1988, p. 25.

[2] *Turner v Safley*, 482 U.S. 78 (1987), basically established that if prisoner officials can invent a rational sounding justification for violating a prisoner's established constitutional rights the courts will allow them to act illegally.

[3] The "PCRA" is a federal law passed by Congress that makes it difficult for prisoners to sue in federal courts and get meaningful relief when they do. Many states have adopted similar laws.

[4] See, *In re Medley*, 134 U.S. 160 (1890).

[5] Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Black Cats Bond: The Industrial Workers of the World and the New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter." <http://rashidmod.com/?p=1251>

[6] See, Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

[7] Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Florida Prisoners Are Laying it Down." (2018) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2498>

[8] "How to Organize A Prison Strike," Pacific Standard (May 7, 2018) <https://psmag.com/social-justice/how-to-organize-a-prison-strike>.

AROUSING THOUGHT WHILE BUILDING PUBLIC OPINION

Part 2

[This is the second part of a two part article. It was too long for all of it to fit into our first issue of *The Kite*.]

By Jose H. Villareal

People's Literature

In any social Movement throughout history the momentum, at some point when facing an oppressor, there will be a need for the people's side to be told. This will mean that a people's literature will be needed and a cadre of writers will need to be unleashed. This works to educate the people who may be bystanders to the particular struggles while bringing more to understand that we stand on the side of justice. Our version of history will require our own writers.

In WHAT IS TO BE DONE Lenin describes the use of literature as a form of war. He described this method of struggling via the pen as "exposure literature" where in Russia in his day this literature sought to expose working conditions of the Proletariat and these writings were most effective. The Russian proletariat were the most revolutionary at the time in Russia. In the same vein our people's literature needs to highlight the contradiction between prisoners and the state, shine a light on the various forms of oppression that we face in U.S. prisons.

Just as the state has propaganda, the people need our propaganda arm as well. This is possible via publishing no matter what kind of concentration kamp we may find ourselves in. Our writing should be harvested from the people from the people in the method of "from the masses, to the masses". Mao explains this process as follows

"In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily "from the masses, to the masses". This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses

so that the ideas are preserved in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge."

From the masses to the masses is the process as Mao explained of taking the ideas of the people and synthesize them in their most advanced form and take them back to the people. This method is repeated and built on so that our ideas become more advanced and closer to truth. Because our social reality, along with all phenomenon is constantly changing this process never ends. We constantly need to assess and re-assess the people's thoughts and politicize the most advanced theory.

It's important that we arouse the Lumpen to wield the power of the pen. Lit is a part of culture and culture is an ideological weapon, one we need to use in the class struggle of the imprisoned Lumpen and the state. Our target audience first and foremost is prisoners. It is essential for the prison mass to understand it is oppressed and then to realize its power.

Political literature has a real role in the building of true political power. An organ in any mass movement is its scaffolding which ensures a strong theoretical training and guidance. This is important because in any struggle, at some point it needs a definite political character. The prison struggle for human rights is no different. If this is an embryonic class struggle that we are facing in prison than we cannot fall back on primitive modes of struggle, we need to ensure we meet 21st century needs, this would include a strong propaganda arm.

Social media, the creation of pamphlets, the production of solid articles and literature which deliver powerful portrayals of prison oppression and our struggles to obtain justice should be pursued with as much vigor as we can espouse.

A people's literature should expose the fallacy of the state while promoting independence of the oppressed internal nations within the U.S. as well as the imprisoned Lumpen. Such examples transform a people and ideologically unhitch the people from the oppressor. As Lenin said it:

"From the moment all members of society or even only the overwhelming majority, have learned to administer the state themselves have taken this

business into their own hands, have "set up" control over the insignificant minority of capitalists, over the gentry, who wish to preserve their capitalist habits, and over the workers who have been completely demoralized by capitalism – from this moment the need for government begins to disappear."

A true people's lit exposes the states errors at every turn. It also shows the people ways in which to rely on our own efforts and kicks state parameters and influence to the curb. This is when as Lenin says the need for the state becomes unnecessary in the minds of the people.

There are dual struggles in constant battle within the people. These manifest in silence and speaking out. Through passivity and activity and resistance and surrender. These struggles will ultimately determine the fate of our oppression. Paulo Freire described ones perception as an "intervention" in an oppressive reality. One that is not in the oppressor's interest. The state would rather prisoners not read of struggles or revolutionary theory, of national liberation, nor of socialism because it weakens its hold on our oppression. So, in this sense it is a struggle in the realm of ideas.

Writing allows us to venture outside our oppression and not only visualize a world where our land is not is not occupied by the oppressor nation, but identify steps which overturn our oppression. The use of language is a rich medium full of a trove of expression and lessons. The use of figurative language for example, is understood in ways other than its literal meaning. Just like the word Aztlan when used today in discussing the Chican@ national territory, we do not mean its HISTORICAL definition of the origin of the Mexica, rather of what it implies to the Chicano@ nation TODAY and is LAND.

The writer should understand words, their power and the contradictions. Paulo Freire defines the contradictions in words as "reflection and action" where they are fused together in a unity of opposites. Words are at once reflective and active in the consciousness of the reader, thus they become transformative. It is then no surprise when we read history and how books were targeted in oppressive societies, or how the CDCR states that "gang leaders" are held in the S.H.U's. It is then no surprise why the state would want to prevent

leaders of the oppressed from advancing their knowledge and keeping revolutionary theory away from its S.H.U's. Amplified analysis of these concentration camps are needed more today. We know this because the state is attempting to smother this analysis so it is a signal to unleash it as never before.

Prison theoreticians can't theorize without the prison masses. Lumpen theory without the Lumpen ain't shit. Lumpen theory should be one with, and provide a clear translation of the challenges within prisons and define ways to combat the oppressive constructs. This should be written from the oppressed perspective. This is the only way to locate a real remedy to our situation. Theory is important and its core theorizing is teaching and teaching is liberating. The essential act then of the theoretician is to help the people to liberate themselves, not in the physical sense at this stage, but through their ideas. Their thought should advance, grow and expand in ways that benefit the oppressed and distinguish the oppressor.

The oppressor nation understands the danger of a thinking Lumpen. This is because it will ultimately be the Lumpen and Third World people who finally put this baby to sleep. So prisoners have a major role in the future of this society, being of the Lumpen class, prisoners when politically conscious are amongst the state's biggest threats. Organized Lumpen are the states enemy. The state fully grasps this, its why so many are tortured in isolation concentration camps. The prison writer when striking up theory, is almost like a translator who delivers these truths to these control units and beyond.

Oppressors Literature

As we begin to delve deeper into what a people's literature is, this analysis would not be complete without studying its opposite which is the oppressor's literature and propaganda. One cannot fully understand any phenomenon without also studying its opposite because one cannot know what propels the other to struggle.

First, it's important to understand that as prisoners our oppressor (the state) controls the media as far as main stream news outlets etc. The bourgeois press is the states mouthpiece so they support the states view on its war on the poor. The poor are often labeled as "criminals" and worse by the press. Because of the oppressors grip on power it has not just controlled the over-

all culture within U.S borders for hundreds of years, but we were all mostly born and raised with the oppressor's view of history, of world events, of what is right and wrong. The oppressor has framed what is morally right for us and our ancestors. We have all attended the oppressors "schools" (brainwash camps) and have learned to act in self-destructing ways.

The oppressor has been so crafty that many Third World peoples have been brainwashed into believing they are a part of the oppressor nation, even when they stand on land stolen from their people by this same oppressor. It's incredible. At some point in the process of consciousness the oppressed will be faced with some critical junctures in the path forward. Freire describes these predicaments of the oppressed as:

"Their ideal is to be men, but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity, this phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed at a certain moment of their existential experience adopt an attitude of "adhesion" to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot "consider" him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him to discover him "outside" themselves"....and Freire here even goes so far as saying "the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole."

So, Freire reveals that the reality of oppression can end up blurring the lines of oppressed vs oppressor to the point where some model the oppressor and seek out those same trinkets that lure the individual out into the abyss. Rather than wanting to get free, the oppressed can end up wanting to be oppressors. This is the real danger that is at hand for any people who suffer oppression. This process is nothing new, it is no big shocker and is not being discovered in this writing because we can look back to history and see it re-appear over and over, it should then not surprise us if it arises in U.S. prisons.

When we are dealing with the oppressor's literature or press we have an uphill battle for sure. Writers are fighting a war of words, with the people's writers on one side and our oppressor's writers on the other side. So we should understand that one of their main weapons in these battles is to label us as "criminals." For most out in society the term "criminal" frightens them. Some prisoners may even become demoralized by this term, but we should

understand this term since it is used against us so much.

"Crime" in the U.S. is debatable, because what is considered a crime in this society may not be a crime if this were another society. Crimes in the U.S. are political because we live in a political society. Because we live under an occupation, where the laws are the laws of the oppressor nation, the colonizers rules, it means its laws are questionable to say the least. When we liberate our land and rid it of the oppressor we can install people's courts to determine what crime will be. Occupying another people's land will surely be seen as a crime.

One author described crime as follows:

"There can be no universal theory for "crime", because it is defined by the shifting boundaries of the law and law enforcement, and the objectives of a given ruling class."

Here the author reveals how laws in any given society are created by those in power. In the U.S. the ruling class has created laws which in most cases reinforces the oppressive nature of our reality. The poor are criminalized in ways which secure the states grip on power. The term "criminal" is more if their propoganda which is used to divide the people and ensure that those on the bottom of the heap receive no support from anyone outside their class. So that even within one's particular nationality they are separated from the rest of their respective nation and looked down upon as a "criminal".

Because the oppressor controls the press and official documents as well as the laws they can write falsehood and not only will much of the public believe it but many prisoners may as well. Recently CDCR passed out a new "Notice of Change to Regulations" dated 6-9-15 which states in part:

"There is no 'solitary confinement' in California prisons and the SHU is not 'solitary confinement'. Many SHU inmates in fact have cellmates. The conditions of confinement in CDCR facilities, including the SHU have been reviewed and monitored by external agencies, including the office of the Inspector General."

I read this notice, which is becoming the rules to the prisons in Califas, and as I sat in solitary confinement I read about how the state is saying there is no solitary confinement. It made me think what our situation would be like if no prison writers existed and the only thing that people out

in society learned about prisons was from the oppressor. It would be a sad situation.

The oppressor's press will continue to write, as CDCR Director Beard did in his op ed for the L.A. Times during our hunger strike. By prisoners not engaging in creating literature which promotes our struggles it will not make the oppressor stop its literary offensive, it will only give up this battlefield to the oppressor.

Conclusion:

Education is something that the state attempts to keep out of our reach if it in our true interests. Their attempts to ban publications and writings from prisoners in recent times reflects this. This is because revolutionary education leads to CONSCIOUSNESS. Consciousness is the key to one's deliverance from oppression of all types. Prison writers are the visionaries which take the prison experience and translate it to others in prison and outside of these concentration camps. The prison theoretician sees those paths which are not yet cut and inject theory into our world so that others can build on these thoughts.

One of our strengths even as prisoners is in our writing. This is one way that we express what cannot be expressed in any other way because of our location.

The prison writer captures history and enshrines it in annals of the people's thought. Imprisoned writers should propagate Lumpen thought and keep it moving toward complete liberation of the people.

There are many ways in which an oppressed people can struggle. Revolutionaries in Turkey for example had their armed underground wing "Kurdistan Workers Party" (PKK), which has an urban semi-underground wing called "Union of Communities in Kurdistan" (KCK) and an above ground liberal wing called "Peace Democracy Party" (BDP) which has seats in the Turkish Parliament. They correctly understand that there is a need for the oppressed to struggle on different levels. This is because there are different spheres to the oppressor.

Prison writers need to be unleashed and work toward combatting the state propaganda. We need our own press and our own cadre of powerful writers. ●

Mother Jones said: "I have never had a vote, and I have raised hell all over this country. You don't need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice!"

CARCERAL ABLEISM AND DISABILITY JUSTICE

The following is adapted from the Rustbelt Abolition Radio episode "Carceral Ableism and Disability Justice", featuring an interview with Liat-Ben Moshe, co-editor of 'Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada'. To read or listen to the full interview, visit <https://rustbeltradio.org/2018/01/10/ep13>

Edited by Emily Sarah Gendler Zisette

Liat Ben-Moshe: What I think is really important is that when we think about abolition as only tearing down, what it leads us to is what James Kilgore calls carceral humanism. And what I would call carceral ableism, really. It's this idea that we can make a more humane carceral state. [...] We can do things that alleviate the suffering of people right now, in terms of the current prison conditions. And one of the things that's problematic with that approach alone is exactly this difference, between tearing down and building anew.

So rehabilitation is also imbued in these kinds of carceral logics. Because we know from people who [...] psychiatric survivors, people who identify as mad, crazy, consumers, ex-patients, anti-psychiatry, these are all different definitions that people might umbrella under. They tell us that for a lot of them, forced medication for example, hospitalization, these are also imbued within the same kind of carceral logics that try to rehabilitate the productive citizen. Which is of course based on white, settler, male, able bodied, straight, all these kind of norm inducing ideas of what productive means. And so to create this kind of model citizens through rehabilitation, and this is something that we also know from scholars who have done work on the connection between prison and settler colonialism especially in the US, is that the work of rehabilitation is the work of the settler state. The point is to rehabilitate the savage, to create this modern, educated citizen which is never the indigenous. Never the person of color, never the disabled person, and so on. And of course, not the intersections of all these.

And so, if we understand rehabilitation as that, it's a form of violence. And so this is not an alternative to incarceration, this is a form of a carceral logic. And if we connect that to DuBois, again we should

really be cautious about the difference between creating the new or reproducing the old. The point is not to assimilate people into the society as it is now, the point is to completely change what we have now, including abolishing systems like racism and capitalism. Which is something that rights movements not necessarily are prepared to do, especially with capitalism and settler colonialism, maybe racism too.

And so if a rights movement is more about fighting for the rights to employment for people with disabilities, I would say disability justice would be more concerned about people's value, regardless of whether or not they're employed. So this idea of going beyond the productive citizen, that's more out of the purview of the disability rights movement. [...] But what disability studies, I think, does really, really well is to talk about how disability is constructed by the social. And the social could also be economical, the social could also be geographical, the social could also be environmental – and all of those connections – but it's to convey that disability is not in people. It's not in people, it's not in minds, it's not in bodies. It's in the interface of those things with environments, and societies, and cultures, and histories. The idea that disability is not inferior, so difference by itself does not need to be in a hierarchy. So if we just had disability by itself, in which people are just different, I don't think we would be having this kind of conversation even. The fact is that disability is in a hierarchy, by which able-bodiedness or able-mindedness, is definitely superior to disability. And that is the problem, and that is the problem that we seek to abolish.

So what disability studies does really well, is to connect movements who see disability as a form of identity and pride. Take pride in their identity, and it doesn't mean that they everyday wake up and say, "Oh, I'm disabled and beautiful, and proud! And everything is sunny and roses, and I get all the services I need, and I live a happy life!". No. But it's really I think radical, to think about disability as beautiful, and to think about disability as part of biodiversity. And to think about disability as something that we can be proud of, even if we are not always are. Just like we're not always proud of being queer, we're not always proud of being women, and sometimes it's shitty.

[Interviewer] a Maria: What are a

couple of examples of the intersections between race and disability, as well as imprisonment?

Liat Ben-Moshe: Absolutely, that's a great question. We're close to Flint, as just one example of what's going on right now. In terms of population of people of color, poor people, that are going to have very high rates of disability unfortunately. Because of lead based poisoning. This is just one example of so, so many that are connecting the intersection of race and disability. And there's a lot of historical connections of that kind. In an article that I did with Jean Stewart, we talk a lot about that intersection, especially in regards to environmental induced disabilities in prisons. So we talk about a few examples of particular prisons that were built on sites that were known to be environmentally toxic, and a kind of production of disability that happens because of the legacy of the toxicity of those sites. And this is going to affect people's lives for a very long time, sometimes even generationally.

a Maria: How does the devaluation of disabled people because of their supposedly "non-productive" embodiment connect to racial capitalism's rendering of particular populations as "surplus," or "redundant" from the vantage point of capital?

Liat Ben-Moshe: The reason why I think it's really important to understand it from those angles is because, as a disabilities studies scholar and as an activist, I think we understand disability a little bit differently maybe than the way a lot of people understand disability. I think the way a lot of people understand disability, is that impairment, as something that makes you not being able to do something. And the way that we understand disability within disability justice, disability studies, is that disability is really the interaction between people and their environment. So for a lot of us, we wouldn't be disabled if it weren't for environmental barriers that are put in place. And these barriers could be capitalism, but it could also be people's attitudes, and it could also be not having ramps or having interpreters, or not having everybody speak sign language, or communicating only orally. Or all these kind of things that we decided as a society, that we are going to do. So this is not something in people's bodies, but it's the connection between people's bodies and the societies in which they live, and the environments in which we live.

So for example, people talk to them-

selves. In certain cultures, this is considered a sign of being closer to some kind of deity or god. Not to romanticize any of this, but of course somebody would do that in this society, we incarcerate them. So our response is to do the exact same behavior that people have, are very different culturally, and are also very different across time and geographical areas and so on. And so, if we understand both race and disability in this kind of way as really socially constructed, I think it's really important to talk about that intersection as well. So I'm really interested in talking about the intersection of impairment and race, but also the intersection of disability and race, as a cultural marker. And in both of those ways, they're both devalued.

This really leads us to think about the surplus populations that you mentioned. So if we take that to understand disability and race as being socially constructed, well often within capitalist societies, which of course is what we live in. And not just capitalism, but racial capitalism, and settler racial capitalism in the US case, then we can think about how do we reproduce disability and race. Especially their intersection, as a kind of burden on society. And when we think about who are the burdens on society, the "disposable" bodies, and I'm saying burden of course with quotations. I don't really mean that, but I mean from the point of view of settler, racial capitalism.

Well, these are the unproductive that we talked about earlier, the need of the state to make people productive. So the unproductive would be people of color, particularly men of particular age, and we know that they are worth much more to the gross domestic product when they are in prison. Occupying prison beds, and it doesn't matter if the prison is for profit or not. The same logic happens in both, so it's not just about private prisons. But they're worth more to the gross domestic product if they're in prison, than they are when they're not. And the same is true for people with disabilities, and of course people who are disabled of color, are worth more in nursing homes, and in institutions, and in prisons, than they are in their own beds.

This is what Martha Russell called "handicapitalism", it's a "great" alchemy that capitalism does where it makes the unproductive into super productive. And we created this whole industry of both the prison industrial complex, but also the institutional industrial complex, and also the health industry. What are social workers,

for example? Case managers, occupational therapists, all these professions, they're built on the backs of people with disabilities. A lot of whom are of course, people of color. And I'm not saying these are not professions to be had, I'm not saying people don't deserve if they need to, to go to an occupational therapist or something like that. But what I'm saying is, that it's really interesting that those are the people we see as burdens. And yet they bring so much profit into the economy at large, and if they didn't exist, we didn't have all these other professions. So that's a really interesting dynamic that we often don't talk about.

EPILOGUE

Andres: The foundational imbrications of ableism and the carceral state are evident not only in the marked overrepresentation of disabled people within formal sites of incarceration, and among the survivors of police violence, but moreover in the forms of surveillance, discipline, and confinement that structure a host of institutions typically understood as outside the purview of the carceral state, such as: nursing homes, psychiatric institutions, and rehabilitation centers, among them. Moore turns our attention to the generative relationship between disability justice and abolition. If abolition means creating a world in which, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore puts it, "there is no boundary or border [used to] keep somebody in or keep somebody out[.]" then abolition must be the practice of dismantling the violent walls erected by ableism and imagining a world in which a great diversity of bodyminds can flourish. ●

Editorial Comments

If you are planning to participate in the national work strike, the editors of this newsletter urge that it be orderly and peacefully carried out. We don't have to tell you how the public will react to violence and property destruction. This is what your captors want. Don't oblige them.

The root of the failure of self-government at Walla Walla during the early 1970s was the unwillingness of that government to enforce discipline within the population.

Were I on the inside right now, I would be ensuring that hot-heads within the population were under firm control. Any society must have rules and, at this point in human history, that includes the means to enforce those rules.

Until next month, good luck.

NOTHING NEW

By Mutope Duguma

“An End To Hostilities” is an agreement/document that was brought forth to build Peace amongst the Prison Class, which means that strong communication between the groups will be used to end any problems that may surface within prisons.

We prisoners had to come to terms with the realization that our inactions have allowed prison officials to suppress us under their Social Tyranny, where we have been held hostage in what we call ‘protracted violence.’ From 1979 to 2009, prison violence would devastate prisoners throughout CDCr, and sadly would do the same to our communities, where we would also be conditioned to this violence inside of California prisons. Based on gathered intelligence, there has never been an impartial nor thorough investigation into how prison officials allowed such violence to occur as well as spread into our communities.

Prisons, no matter what their classification levels, I, II, III or IV, are very dangerous environments. They house mostly young people; those who suffer from drugs and alcoholism. Least we cannot forget those undeveloped minds, which have yet to become rational thinking men and women. Therefore, it’s relatively easy to socially engineer prisoners under social tyranny by manipulating conflicts that lead to their destruction.

Prison officials have total control over all prisoners held in CDCr and this affords them the power to impose their will upon prisoners as they try to see fit.

So, prisons and citizens of this country should not be surprised to see that CDCr is managing prisoners with violence in order to secure their best interest: Higher Pay and Job Security. Peaceful prisons go against CDCr agenda, and therefore, violence has to be its trademark.

This explains why CDCr would want to disturb the current peace achieved by more experienced prisoners who have built solidarity around our “Agreement to End All Hostilities” (AEH). CDCr needs to ‘come clean’ and take responsibility for their role in fueling so much of the violence between prisoners.

The million-dollar question for all tax payers is: Why disturb such a Peace???

Case and Point:

1. It was CDCr who manipulated the racial violence between prisoners by putting

them against one another, favoring one group over the other, in respects to Jobs, etc. I been in Calipatria three (3) years, and there have been countless incidents where staff attempted to instigate or agitate violence amongst prisoners, but due to our AEH we have been able to counter these attacks through Sound Communication, rooted in respect for what is right!!!

2. It was CDCr who created the debriefing program that put prisoners against prisoners that led to thousands of prisoners becoming informants (i.e., snitches) and this was done by torturing each of these prisoners held in solitary confinement units, that forced many of them into being informants.
3. It was CDCr who created the indeterminate SHU program that held men and women indefinitely inside of solitary confinement units, through a gang validation process that allowed them to remove all the “unfavorable” prisoners off general population, where prisoners were held for decades; the longest up to 44 years.
4. It was CDCr who created the Sensitive Needs Yards (SNY), which is one third (1/3) of the prison population today... SNY prisoners who are, or were, “keep aways” from general population prisoners for various reasons such as: informants, child molesters, rapists, Elderly, etc., all of whom requested to be placed in protected custody.
5. It was CDCr who set up the Gladiator Fights inside Corcoran State Prison Security Housing Unit – CSP-SHU in the 1980s, that led to seven (7) prisoners being murdered in cold blood and thousands of prisoners being wounded and beat on in these conflicts instigated and agitated by CDCr officials.
6. It was CDCr who did away with all the positive incentive programs that led to the hopelessness that we see throughout cdc today.
7. It was CDCr who did away with nutritious foods and went to non-nutritious foods, starting in 1997, that is today having an adverse effect on prisoners health and behavior.

These failures on CDCr’s, part led to deadly consequences for prisoners. The senseless violence we experienced in the past is now being introduced again by CDCr, who continue to find ways to socially engineer prisoners under Social Tyranny... The claim that they (CDCr) will

be able to determine if prisoners want to go home or not is total BS, by integrating SNYs and GP prisoners who should’ve never been separated in the first place.

Those of us who were manipulated into this violence have first-hand experience on how it works, and we are doing what we can to educate those prisoners who don’t see the un-seen hand of CDCr. Because, unlike our past, we are today very mature thinking men and women who have taken responsibility for our roles inside the man-made madness, by coming together and establishing An End To All Hostilities, whereas the Four (4) Principle Groups agreed on their word alone to end this prison violence amongst the races, which has saved countless lives thus far today.

What is CDCr’s objective to off-set the many positive programs/ policies that s affording prisoners the opportunity to go home? CDCr’s objective, as always, is that Peace goes against their bottom line: Profiting off Prisoners.

So, as long as CDCr officials want to use violence in order to secure their income, there will be violence in prisons. (See recent article by Nashelly Chavez, May 27, 2018, titled: California Prisons Phase out ‘Sensitive Needs Yards’ Critics See A Rough Transition.)

We are an expendable source, therefore, our lives have no value to our keepers. It is us who put value in our lives and this is where our power comes from, Reclaiming our Humanity. The violence is Nothing New. ●

*One Love - One Struggle’
Mutope Duguma*

Mutope Dugumais at CSP Calipatria. He is a member of the Human Rights Movement First Amendment Campaign and PLEJ for Liberation and is a prolific author, with articles published in the SF Bay View and many other places, including his website, <http://www.mutopeduguma.org>. Write to Mutope at Mutope Duguma (s/n J. Crawford), D-05996, CSP Calipatria B-5, C-242, P.O. Box 5005, Calipatria, CA 92233-5005.

See, They Are Employable

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho prison officials say 364 inmates hacked the JPay tablets they use for email, music and games and collectively transferred nearly a quarter million dollars into their own accounts.

LETTERS

LETTERS

Hi Kite!

Just heard about your newsletter from the folks at Casuerie. Please place me on your mailing list.

There is an exciting amount of collective action going on in my neck of the woods here at Monroe Correctional Complex-Washington State Reformatory (MCC-WSR). Here we have the Black Prisoners Caucus (BPC) and Concerned Lifers Organization (CLO). Both these groups are led by currently incarcerated people & work from prison abolitionist & consensus frameworks. The 'UniversityBeyondBars.org' (UBB) is an AA degree program which was originally a BPC project & now is it's own separate organization. Healing Education and Accountability for Liberation (HEAL) grew out of a collaboration between the CLO & BPC to bring the Insight-PrisonProject.org (IPP) in California up to Washington State.

[HEAL] gives us incarcerated folks an opportunity to participate in restorative justice healing circles. 'Unloop.org' is another education program, this one focused on computer programming. It brings Web developer programs into the prison & helps graduates from the program upon release get internships & the basic gear they will need to be a programmer.

While it sounds super exciting that all this wonderful work is happening at MCC-WSR, let us contrast with Washington State Penitentiary West Complex (WSP-WC) where I did eight years closed custody time. There is no group there which runs on consensus or is so much as informed by prison abolition. They have programs there like thinking about your thinking & anger management & control training. For a short time there was a Toastmasters Club, however, administration shut it down by revoking the sponsor badges of the wonderful people who came into the prison & allowed us to have a club. The administration used similar tactics to halt religious & other programs from existing. No WICCA circle, no Jewish services, rarely Muslim services, even AA (alcoholics anonymous) was shut down through this tactic for five of the eight years I was there. The reason this tactic works is because according to DOC policy incarcerated people cannot meet without someone from outside the prison coming in to sponsor the group.

Thus, if administration wants to discriminate against pagans, Jews, Muslims or other groups, by policy they can by simply pulling or not issuing sponsor badges to the people that want to volunteer their time in the prison. Even groups that already have sponsors live in constant fear of this. The Jewish community here at WSR has had a thriving program for many years that was nearly destroyed by the Chaplin here by simply taking away the volunteers' sponsor badges.

So here's your mission, should you choose to accept it. Fill out the paperwork on the DOC web-site to be a sponsor at your local prison. There are about a dozen scattered across the state. Even if you can only commit to showing up once a month, add three other people to that & suddenly there's a weekly program. Or maybe you join an already existing program. It takes over a dozen volunteers to make the UBB work any given week & who knows, maybe you will be the last sponsor standing that keeps a program alive when the next time the DOC tries to arbitrarily shut down a program.

However that plays out, there are thousands of men, women & children being warehoused in Washington State's part of the PIC. We need you.

In solidarity, Amber Kim,

Abolish ICE

Solidarity with those detained (children, women, and men) by immigration and Customs Enforcement and the families you are forcibly kept from.

You are held in those for profit gulags, whose aims are to maintain a rotten nationalist-racist-capitalistic social order. The August 21st National Prison Strike called for strikes and boycotts in and against those so called immigration detentions for a reason, to acknowledge for the world that our struggles are not separate.

The Prison Industrial Slave Complex is a massive dehumanization business. With the ongoing rages against the detentions, we now feel justified in our call for National Strikes and outside protests against these places (immigration, federal, state, and jails) that for the most part are warehouses of human bodies.

Those occupying the so called immigration detentions must not allow a small concession by a policy change make you go away. You hold the keys to change. A full demand to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement should be the only resolution on the table. Otherwise the same problems will persist. Strike now, and strike hard while the momentum is going. August 21, thousands of prisoners in other places of detention will be joining at all costs.

We will keep the beam on so called immigration. No let up.

Educate, organize, mobilize! Resist! Abolish ICE!

Emily Sarah Gendler Zisette

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the things I cannot change,**



**I am changing the things I
cannot accept.**

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Rock On!

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