

!ROCK!

★ Working to Extend Democracy to All★

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WOMEN BECOME LEADERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN NEW YORK

By Keri Blakinger

Jessica Casanova's nephew wrote her a letter: "I'm here in a steel coffin. I'm breathing but I'm dead." Casanova recounted, "I didn't know what that meant so I got on a bus and I found out."

That was in 2012, and three years later, she's still finding out. As it turned out, Casanova's nephew, Juan, was in solitary confinement. He was spending 23 hours a day alone in a cell and deteriorating quickly.

Juan had entered the New York State prison system as a teenager with mental health issues. Casanova said, "He suffered from antisocial personality, borderline personality, severe depression, and addiction."

His first trip to solitary was in 2001, for allegedly smoking a joint. Although Juan was only isolation for a matter of months, Casanova said, "He's never been the same after that." While his first stay was brief, at

this point the 33-year-old has now spent a total of about 10 years in solitary. Casanova went on to explain that her nephew now suffers from extreme bouts of depression, paranoia, and mood swings. She added, "Sometimes in the letters it seems like he might be hallucinating."

"Seeing someone in solitary confinement," Casanova said, "is like you're watching them die right in front of your eyes. ... I have never in my life experienced another human being being reduced to nothingness." She added, "I just don't understand how this can happen in the world."

Although her nephew's experience opened Casanova's eyes, the 43-years-old East Harlem resident is not the only one coming to such realizations. Nationwide, there are at least 80,000 people in solitary confinement on any given day – and most have families who watch them suffer.

Leah Gitter, a retired New York City schoolteacher, is another of those suffering relatives. Her godson, Robert, has spent time in solitary both in Attica and Green Haven, maximum security prisons in New York State.

Gitter said that, during the time Robert was in solitary confinement, "I saw him becoming more unstable and more isolated and sicker. It was like he was withdrawing." She added, "You get into this mindset where you can't function because of all that isolation and he wasn't well to begin with."

As is perhaps evident from Casanova's and Gitter's stories, despite the documented mental health impacts, individuals

with existing mental health problems are routinely placed in solitary confinement, a practice which may be counterproductive to any perceived public safety goals. Gitter observed, "I don't know who benefits from punishing people like that."

Robin Goods can relate. Her son, George, has spent more than a decade in solitary confinement in California. She said, "I have been visiting with my son George E. Jacobs for the past 10 years behind a glass window. When I look into his eyes I can see the progression of the effects of torture. The first year George had a distance look in his eyes. After the second year in the SHU he had a vague look in his eyes. Now after ten years in the SHU, George has a hollow empty look in his eyes. I am witnessing my son being slowly and deliberately tortured to the point of ... devastating mental health deterioration."

Initially, her son was isolated for a small infraction – Goods said she was told that he refused to take out his shoe laces before a visit. He was sentenced to two years in solitary, but prison officials gradually extended his stay longer and longer. She said, "When he goes for the review they say it's small infractions like refusing to eat, sharing food." Recently, George was let out of SHU, but instead of being moved to general population, he was just placed in another type of solitary confinement known as Administrative Segregation.

Goods said, "The deterioration is so profound that it almost affects me. You feel like you want to scream at the top of your lungs, because how can you help? What

CONTENTS

Women Fight Against Solitary...1
Meet UN Special Rapporteur...2
Ed's Ramblings.....3
Quote Box.....5
Black Cats Bond.....6
The Law of Organization.....7
Women: Loved Ones Inside.....9

can you do?” Answering her own question, she continued, “I felt so depressed and helpless and anything I tried wasn’t going anywhere. Then I became angry and decided to stand back up and fight.”

That urge to fight is something Goods has in common with Casanova and Gitter. As a result of their family connections, all three women have become crusaders against solitary confinement.

Gitter said that, knowing about the conditions of her godson’s confinement, “I was so frustrated. This was the only way I could survive — to think that I could do something, to save his life.” She became active in Mental Health Alternatives to Solitary Confinement (MHASC) and “fought like hell” to get the SHU Exclusion Law passed in 2008. The law is meant to bar most people with serious mental illness from being placed in isolation in New York’s state prisons. Gitter said, “We had press conferences and lobby days. We were relentless, even though it took eight years — a human rights bill [took] eight years to get passed.”

Jennifer Parish, the director of criminal justice advocacy at the Urban Justice Center’s Mental Health Project, said, “Leah in some way is the godmother of the movement. She’s been a force for speaking to policy makers at all different levels ... She had really done so much to gather people around addressing the problem of people with mental illness in our prison system and in solitary confinement.”

While Gitter has been involved in solitary confinement activism for over a decade, Casanova got into it more recently. In 2013, she joined the New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) and in 2014 spoke at the first press conference announcing the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act. The HALT Act, which is gradually gaining momentum in both the Senate and the House, would ban solitary confinement in New York’s prisons and jails to 15 days, the limit suggested by the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Torture. Individuals requiring more secure housing over the long term would be placed in new Residential Rehabilitation Units with increased therapy and programming.

Parish said of Casanova, “She’s a tremendous advocate. When she talks about what her nephew has gone through it’s just incredibly powerful.”

Though Goods lives in New Jersey, she’s also been active in CAIC, a New York-based group. Parish said, “Robin has a

leadership role within CAIC she’s one of the co-chairs of the legislative committee. She’s been part of taking trips to communities upstate to help form branches of CAIC. She’s done presentations upstate. Her son is in California so the fact that she’s working so strongly here is amazing.”

Goods said that, if there’s one thing she’s learned through her activism, it’s that if you’re a family member of someone in solitary, “You are the extended voice on the outside and you should use it as loudly as you can. There’s nothing worse going to happen than what’s already happened.”

Although Casanova, Gitter, and Goods are all important figures in the movement against solitary, they aren’t the only ones — there are wives, girlfriends, parents, siblings, and children scattered throughout activist groups.

“I think,” Parish said, “one of the most important roles that family members play in the movement is reminding everyone who’s involved about the urgency of changing these policies. Because every day their family members are facing solitary or have the potential to face it, and it reminds us that this is not an abstract problem. I think that for people are in the movement it can sometimes be far away. Prisons are closed institutions. But the families constantly keep the fire burning in all of us to make the changes.” •

<http://solitarywatch.com/2015/05/28/with-loved-ones-in-prison-women-become-leaders-in-the-fight-against-solitary-confinement-in-new-york/#more-15401>

CON MEETS WITH UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON TORTURE

By Baridi J. Williamson, April 29, 2015

On Dec. 9, 2014, I visited with Mr. Juan Méndez, the U.N. special rapporteur on torture, who is now an expert on our class action lawsuit to end solitary confinement torture here in California. Hopefully, it will have a ripple effect across the U.S.

Being that Mr. Méndez, who had previously been denied access into this state’s prisons, was only able to visit about 10 men here in the Pelican Bay SHU, I presented him a full human, civil and constitutional rights report on behalf of all the men there

and our outside mutually suffering families. It was titled, “CDCR’s solitary confinement (SHU) torture policies, practices, environment and conditions of dehumanization, sensory deprivation, anti-social isolation, cruelty and torture is rotten to its core!”

I gave him a living experience witnessed from its opening in late December 1989 to the present under its “snitch, parole or die” mass validation and indeterminate SHU torture classification and enhanced coerced debriefing.

Because as I explained to Mr. Méndez, CDCR is still scheming to keep their multi-million-dollar SHU prison cells filled to keep receiving these annual multi-billion dollars of taxpayer’s money when they are supposed to release all of us instead of holding anyone in the varying steps 1-4. And in some instances — like my former cellie PJ — they have not even presented his case before the DRB (Departmental Review Board) since he has been kept in solitary confinement (SHU) for over a quarter century, and CDCR claimed to be “reviewing those cases who’ve been there the longest.” He should have been released to GP (general population) by now!

Here we are, after experiencing the largest prison hunger strike in California history, legislative hearings, class action lawsuits, CDCR officials’ admissions that their scheme to mass-validate (although they prefer to use the term “over-classify”) was wrong and our five core demands were reasonable and should have been granted a long time ago. Why in the hell do they still have anyone in that SHU after they have been wrongfully placed and kept there?

Their scheme was designed and created, implemented, instituted, orchestrated, administered, managed, operated and supervised to break the human mind and spirit to create “broken” men. Sadly, they did break many human beings under their diabolical scheme, coercing them to debrief and out of despair to escape the crushing pressures of their SHU torture. Those men agreed to become prison informants (snitches) and say whatever their tormentors tell them to even if it means to lie on their fellow SHU captives and keep them forever in SHU so the snitch can get out.

Here we are, in 2015, decades after CDCR’s human-breaking, snitch-making scheme began, and there are many real men who have not been broken and continue to defy and resist that scheme, including myself. You will never count me among the broken men! •

ED'S RAMBLINGS AND A HISTORY LESSON

"American capitalism, based as it is on exploitation of the poor, with its fundamental motivation in personal greed, simply cannot survive without force."

—Philip Agee, CIA Diary

Shortly before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, I was a member of Prison Talk Online (PTO), a place where former prisoners and the loved ones of those on the inside share stories, problems, and pretty much anything else they want to write about. It's a very nice forum. The site was run by a Texas patriot who called himself FedX. He would prattle on-and-on about how "we gonna kick the asses of those ragheads" in Iraq. Well, of course I objected to his pro-war diatribes, whereupon FedX promptly kicked me off the board because of said objection. I eloquently (or so I thought) argued that the weapons inspectors sent by the U.S. said there were no weapons of mass destruction¹, that Iraq was a secular nation, and it had more rights for women than any other country in the region. I argued that we are there only going there to steal their oil. Etc. There was no using reason. I left the forum.

Fast forward about 12 years. In today's news it was reported that Ramadi, less than 70 miles from Baghdad, fell to ISIS. CBS said 1,300 U.S. soldiers (they did not say how many were wounded) were killed in the battle to retake Ramadi from the Iraqi resistance fighters (who were defending their nation from the foreign invaders and occupiers).

Mr. FedX must be feeling real proud right now that 1,300 U.S. troops died for absolutely nothing—as did the thousands of soldiers killed in other Iraqi battles (and the 58,000 plus who were killed in the Viet Nam War). All died for absolutely nothing! The U.S. gets away with all this because of its weapons of mass deception. Were it not for that, the American people might object to having their sons and daughters slaughtered in wars that serve no purpose other than to make the rich even richer.

How fucked up is our system of governance? John Kiriakon, who exposed the CIA's torture program served two years in prison for doing so, while those who ordered the torture (in which on at least nine occasions ended in death) have never been charged with any crime. But hey, those are

1. Why Israel and other Middle Eastern nations can have such weapons and Iraq can't is a mystery to me.

small potatoes compared to the crime of starting a wars of aggression and slaughtering millions².

The author John Pilger writes that:

"since 1945, the US has tried to overthrow more than 50 governments, many of them democratically elected; grossly interfered in elections in 30 countries; bombed the civilian populations of 30 countries; used chemical and biological weapons; and attempted to assassinate foreign leaders.

He goes on to note:

"[t]he leaders of these obstructive nations are usually violently shoved aside, such as the democrats Muhammad Mossedeq in Iran, Arbenz in Guatemala and Salvador Allende in Chile, or they are murdered like Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of Congo. All are subjected to a western media campaign of vilification – think Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez when he was alive, and now Vladimir Putin."

The same people doing these wrongs are also destroying the planet for nothing other than the holy grail of profit. Worse, they are committing these crimes in your name. So as you are standing there watching a Boston Marathon or some such thing and someone blows you up, you are not an innocent bystander to the person who planted that device—you are one of those who remains silent as despicable crimes against humanity are being committed in your name. Yet you've never objected to these evils, or even asked *why* these people want to kill you. Doesn't that leave you as somewhat less than innocent?

The question of "*why*" is difficult for many people because bourgeois propaganda provides you with a readymade answer: Then president George W. Bush, newscasters like the former Dan Rather, and entertainers such as David Letterman all tell us why the terrorists hate us—"they hate us because they are jealous." Now you have the answer as to "*why*." The only problem is that it's a false answer. People do not strap on suicide vests and kill themselves and others because they are jealous of some

2. According to former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara 2.3 million Vietnamese were killed in Vietnam. The globally recognized figure for Iraqis killed so far in that blunder of a war is 1.5 million. These figures do not include all the people around the world assassinated by the CIA, murdered in drone strikes, the invasions of places like Grenada, Panama and Afghanistan, the bombing campaigns against Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Libya, etc.

nation on a far off continent. Just how stupid do you have to be to believe a story like that?

The U.S. invaded Iraq for only one reason—oil. The invasion was an international act of armed robbery. Who could have guessed that the victims of this crime would violently object? Our leaders were telling us the joyful Iraqi people would be throwing rose peddles at the feet of our troops in thanks for having liberated them from Saddam's harsh rule.

I do not care much for the existing U.S. government. I love this land, but I do not like the government, which for the most part serve only the interests of the rich and powerful at the expense of poor and working people. For a more just government it will be essential to replace the existing U.S. ruling class and replace it with working class rule—socialism.

Because of the ruling class' hatred of the term socialism, there is a lot of confusion about what the term actually means. This is confusion is rooted in a dis-information campaign that has been waged for over a hundred years, and is primarily expressed through the bourgeoisie's monopoly on the media outlets and the means of education. Germany's top propaganda officer during World War II was Dr. Gobbles, who said something to the effect that a lie told often enough becomes truth in the eyes of the masses. Thus your parents, you, and your children will be taught that capitalism is democracy and socialism is totalitarianism (fascism).

Actually, the ruling class media is selling you a lie. Capitalism and socialism are both economic systems, whereas democracy and totalitarianism are political systems. Think of these terms in the context of a huge ocean liner. The infrastructure of that ship, the bottom part of the vessel, holds the engine that drives the ship forward. That engine is the economic system, and it can be socialist or capitalist, etc. In our socialist analogy the wealth created by working people would be divided among working people (not go into private hands of billionaires), and the government would be organized to protect the interests of workers rather than those of the rich. I'm guessing you already know what the capitalist's engine looks like and what it does so I won't go there. All you have to do is look inside the prisons, at the ever growing homelessness problem, endless wars, corruption, etc.

Sitting on top of that ships economic infrastructure is a political system. While the engine drives the vessel forward, it is the political superstructure that determines the direction the ship is steering. This superstructure sits atop any infrastructure that may be in place, be it capitalism or socialism. In other words, you can have capitalist infrastructure along with a fascist superstructure, as was the case back in 1970s when Chile's democratically elected government was violently overthrown (with U.S. help) and a fascist dictator install in his place. On the other hand you could have a socialist engine with a liberal democracy guiding it forward. My point is that capitalism does not equal democracy.

Now that we understand how a given society's economic system and political organization are two separate things, we can then move on to define socialism. You will hear the right wing accuse politicians who want to improve conditions for ordinary people referred to as socialists. Obama got a lot of that over his healthcare program for Americans. Some Scandinavian countries are called socialists because of how well they take care of their citizens. But socialism is not about social programs such as health care and such. Oh yes, everyone would have a right to free medical treatment, education, a job, etc. But that too is not socialism. *Socialism is an economic system defined by which class owns the means of production*³. So while some might say Sweden is a socialist nation because of its liberal social policies, it is not socialist because the means of production are in private rather than public hands. They are simply a fairer and more just form of capitalism—they are able to provide these social programs by taxing their capitalists, something the U.S. is unwilling to do.

So when anyone tries to fool you by saying this or that nation is socialist, even some countries who might even call themselves socialists, all you have to do is look at which class owns the means of production—a government representing the working class (the overwhelming majority), or what we have now, a government by the rich for the rich (the one percent)?

Every economic system, be it slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, or communism (there are no others) implements laws to secure their particular system. Under slavery for example, be it Greek, Roman, American, etc., the slave was prop-

erty. The slave's owner could slit guts out of a slave just to watch him die, and the law of the time would have protected his right to do so—it was his property.

Then came feudalism, which for working people was an improvement over the system of slavery. You as a worker were no longer property, but you were tied to the land, which you worked for your lord, who allowed you to keep a certain amount of what you produced.

After feudalism came capitalism, yet another improvement for working people. They were no longer tied to the land, but could go into the cities and work in the growing number of factories ushered in by the industrial revolution. Since then capitalism has been steadily evolving to the point where today we have fascism at home and imperialism abroad.



The global transition from slavery to feudalism took several thousand years, as slavery existed long before the early Egyptians implemented that system. The shift from feudalism to capitalism took about one thousand years, from the end of the Roman Empire to the industrial age. It appears as if the change from capitalism to socialism will take less time. The first socialist experiment was nearly a hundred years ago with the 1917 revolution in Russia. The second was in China. Global imperialism has been able to reverse those gains, as both Russia and China are now capitalists. Remember, which class owns the means of production. In both Russia and China those means are today in private hands rather than in the hands of a government representing the interests of the global working class. Again, don't listen to what they say about themselves, look at their economic engine instead. China says it's a communist nation, it is ruled by a communist party, but the means of production are in private hands and the government of China represents the interests of those owners, of their

own billionaires.

What about communism? Socialism is from each according to his ability, to each according to his work. Communism is from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. While under slavery the law protected your right to own other human beings. Under feudalism the laws of the day mandated that you be tied to the land you were born on, as agriculture and animal husbandry were the dominant means of production, which required a stable workforce. And as noted earlier, for working people capitalism was an improvement over feudalism. Workers were now free to sell their labor to anyone who would hire them. These were the days of child labor, the 16 hour work day, and so many other abuses. Just as the laws slavery protected the rights of the slave owners, to too the laws of capitalism enshrine the right of the rich to extract surplus value⁴ (oppress and exploit) from working people. This seems fair and just to most folks, right? Not so under socialism. In a socialist system it would be a crime for you to personally profit from the labor of others. Such exploitation will be a thing of the past.

Unfortunately we can't afford to wait another thousand years for the next economic transition. Some years ago an economist I trust wrote that U.S. imperialism's economy (GDP) must grow by 3.6 percent a year just to stand still. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis' quarterly data: "Real gross domestic product -- the value of the production of goods and services in the United States, adjusted for price changes -- increased at an annual rate of 0.2 percent in the first quarter of 2015." Not only must U.S. imperialism expand or die, the same is true of the little imperialists like Russia and China. Which leads us to the need for urgency.

World Wars I and II had the same basic cause. The global resources were all claimed and controlled by the big imperialist powers, like England, France, and the U.S. The up-and-coming economies such as those of Germany or Japan had no place to grow, as at a certain point they too must also expand or die. As they attempt to expand into other countries these weaker imperialists come up against the big imperialists, who had already carved up the global resources and now must defend them from the challengers. In the case of WW II, for

4. According to Marx's theory, surplus value is equal to the new value created by workers in excess of their own labor-cost, which is then appropriated by the capitalist as profit.

example, Japan goes into China, the Philippines, etc. while Germany does the same thing in Europe, like taking France, invading Russia, and so on.

Karl Marx wrote that “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce.” The now conquered weak wanna be imperialists of WW I and II, like Japan and Germany, are now occupied nations. Whereas today it is Russia and China who are looking for their places in the economic sun, a place already occupied by the big imperialists of the U.S. and its NATO puppets. Are we on our way to WW III? I don’t think we are on our way to WW III, as it appears as if we are already in the opening phases of that conflict—think Middle East, Ukraine, Syria, Northern Africa, the South China Sea, etc. To one degree or another some people see a larger war looming, although they do not know what to do about it—they see no rational alternative. Of course there are none as blind as those who refuse to see.

Neoliberalism is U.S. imperialism’s doctrine chosen to carry out the PNAC (Plan for a New American Century), the road map for the empire and its stooges to encompass the globe and reach Full Spectrum Dominance. Its instruments resonate with Kissinger’s infamous dictum - “Who controls the food supply controls the people; who controls the energy can control whole continents; who controls money can control the world.” Control the world? The problem with the whole world domination thing is that there are nations, Russia and China come to mind, who are not interested in being dominated by anyone.

In her Junius Pamphlet, Rosa Luxemburg quoted Fredrich Engels as saying “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.” She goes on to say, “[T]he triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization. At first, this happens sporadically for the duration of a modern war, but then when the period of unlimited wars begins it progresses toward its inevitable consequences. Today, we face the choice exactly as Fredrich Engels foresaw ... either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international [working class] against imperialism and its method of war.” We still stand at that crossroads today—the victory of socialism or world-wide death and destruction. As always, you have a vote. You vote with your feet. ●

Quote Box

"The debate heres isn't only how to protect the country. It's how to protect our values. If cruelty is no longer declared unlawful, but instead is applied as a matter of policy, it alters the fundamental relationship of man to government. It destroys the whole notion of individual rights. The Constitution recognizes that man has an inherent right, not bestowed by the state or laws, to personal dignity, including the right to be free of cruelty. It applies to all human beings, not just in America--even those designated as 'unlawful enemy combatants.' If you make this exception the whole Constitution crumbles."

*Alberto J. Mora,
former Navy General Counsel*

"It bothers me that the executive branch is taking the amazing position that just on the president's say-so, any American citizen can be picked up, not just in Afghanistan, but at O'Hare Airport or on the streets of any city in this country, and locked up without access to a lawyer or court just because the government says he's connected somehow with the Taliban or Al Qaeda."

*Laurence Tribe, Professor of Constitutional Law,
Harvard University*

"Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them. There is almost no kind of outrage—torture, imprisonment without trial, assassination, the bombing of civilians—which does not change its moral color when it is committed by 'our' side. The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them."

George Orwell

"Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe"

Frederick Douglass

"What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do."

John Ruskin

"Movements are like this. They are grassroots, often underground, and they start with crazy people who are willing to believe in the impossible. Movements never start in corporate offices with executives drawing up a master plan. If we truly want to see the world changed, we must begin as a band of madmen, welcoming other crazy people who want to be a part of something bigger than themselves."

Neil Cole

"As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever."

Clarence Darrow, Attorney

"The violent subjugation of the Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghans will only ensure that those who oppose us will increasingly speak to us in the language we speak to them—violence."

Chris Hedges

"The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to the point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism—ownership of government by an individual, by a group or any controlling private power."

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

BLACK CATS BOND: THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD AND THE NEW AFRIKAN BLACK PANTHER PARTY - PRISON CHAPTER (2015)

I have, as an active leading member of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party - Prison Chapter (NABPP-PC), recently joined the International Workers of the World (IWW) upon its founding the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC).(1)

The IWOC's stated purpose is to "function [] as a liaison for prisoners to organize each other, unionize, and build solid bridges between prisoners on the inside and fellow workers on the outside." (2) To this end the IWW has recognized:

"Prisoners are on the front lines of wage slavery and forced slave labor where refusal to work while in prison results in the inhumane retaliation and participation in slave labor contributes to the mechanisms of exploitation. The [IWW] has consciously grasped the importance of organizing prisoners so that prisoners can directly challenge prison slavery, work conditions, and the system itself: break cycles of criminalization, exploitation, and the state sponsored divisions of our working class. At the same time, the prison environment and culture is a melting pot of capitalistic and exploitative tactics and all forms of oppression. These poisons must be challenged in prisons, institutions, and in all of us, through organized working class solidarity." [3]

The NABPP-PC has unity with this line and purpose, and allies with the IWW to these and broader ends. Indeed we have for years advanced the idea of extending union membership to prisoners.[4] So the IWOC's founding is right on time!

The NABPP-PC is not a traditional communist party, but rather a pre-party formation that advances the cause of revolutionary intercommunalism, and whose target base is the oppressed urban masses and prisoners (the lumpen and unemployed in particular [5]) of all nationalities, "races," etc., but especially New Afrikans/Blacks. Within the NABPP-PC we have the White Panther Organization (WPO) and Brown Panther Organizing Committee (BPOC), which operate as arms of the NABPP-PC to bring our line and strategy to all other oppressed peoples.

The NABPP-PC is guided by the ideological and political line of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM). We unite in cama-

raderie with all whom we can to oppose the oppressive capitalist imperialist system, racism and repression, whether they share our line or not.

Various strata of the working class in Amerika have been spontaneously rising in protest against unsatisfactory work conditions and wages. From those in the lower service trades, to teachers, to public sector workers. Many have been oriented to more radical politics than mere trade unionism which only aspires to workplace and wage reforms. This was evidenced in the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in September 2011 and quickly spread across Amerika. Various 'mainstream' sectors have been reaching for political lines that address greater social ills like capitalist driven environmental crisis, imperialist wars, the proliferation of "terroristic" violence especially in regions of the world destabilized by the policies and actions of the US and its allies, police violence, sexism, prevailing racism mass imprisonment, etc. Only a thoroughgoing revolutionary political line can connect clear analyses and solutions with these questions.

During the early 1900s proletarian revolutionary fervor and organizing was at its height in Amerika, especially with the organizing work of Communists and Anarchists allied within the IWW. Much of this was lost as state repression clamped down on the IWW and the Communists were pulled out of the IWW by the Comintern, and concentrated in the more traditional unions from which they were in turn driven during the post- World War II era of the Cold War, Red Scare and anti-communist witch hunts. As a result the working class struggle ground to an unceremonious halt, from which it has not since rebounded.

The Communists of that era made many tactical errors, one of which, implied here, was to abandon the unions and the revolutionary work of raising the workers' political consciousness and organizing within them. Reflecting on this history has given us food for thought about today's labor movement.

The AFL-CIO is bankrupt, but the IWW has definite possibilities. It has grown dramatically in recent years and probably benefitted more from the Occupy Movement than any other organization.

From just a few hundred members it grew to a national membership of several thousands since Occupy started. From this we saw three different possibilities for future growth.

1. Formation of IWW caucuses within existing unions
2. Organizing unemployed workers
3. Formation of a prisoners' union under IWW sponsorship and for granting prisoners IWW membership

The third has been done. As the Prison Industrial Complex grows, the issue of unionization becomes more practical, particularly as regards unpaid or barely paid labor and human rights in general.

In its heyday, the IWW was the closest thing to a mass revolutionary movement this country has seen prior to the old Black Panther Party. It was an important spawning pool for the Communist Party even though the Comintern pulled the communists out to concentrate them in the AFL and later the CIO.

With the bulk of the workers now concentrated in the low-wage service sectors, and a largely de-industrialized domestic economy since the 1970s, there isn't the basis to support a typical labor union infrastructure in Amerika.

We promote assigning Panther cadre to work within the Union to develop it as part of the United Panther Movement [4] with a concentration on workers in the oppressed communities, prisoners and the unemployed. This would help to build the United Front Against Capitalist - Imperialism, Racism and Repression and a mass anti-imperialist movement.

Thus the NABPP-PC unites in programmatic unity with the IWW whose symbol like our own is that of a riled black cat! •

*Dare to struggle dare to win!
All power to the people!*

NOTES:

1. Article II, sec. 1.c. of the IWW Constitution permits membership to unpaid officers of political parties.
2. The Incarcerated Worker, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2015, p.1
3. Ibid.
4. See, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, Promoting Proletarian Consciousness as Prisoner Rehabilitation (2007), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=374>
5. For an analysis of our line on the lumpen and the proletariat as our mass base, see, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, The NABPP-PC: Our Line (2005), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=286>

Break into a railroad boxcar and you'll go to federal prison. Steal a railroad and they'll make you a senator. So the old saying goes.

In a similar vein, five of the world's top banks will merely pay fines after pleading guilty to rigging the price of foreign currencies and interest rates. Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, Barclays and Royal Bank of Scotland pleaded guilty to conspiring to manipulate the price of U.S. dollars and euros exchanged in the \$5 trillion FX spot market. UBS pleaded guilty for its role in manipulating the Libor benchmark interest rate. No individual bank employees were hit with criminal charges.

Why hello Mr. George Jackson, you say you went to prison for how many years before you were killed by guards? How much did you steal? Oh, a mere \$70. Well yes, I see your problem—you were not rich.

Introducing a new publication from the Industrial Workers of the World, the *Incarcerated Worker*! Over the last year or so, some prisoners in the U.S. and outside supporters have gotten together and formed the IWW Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee to address concerns such as prison labor and conditions. Contact them at:

Industrial Workers of the World
General Headquarters
The Incarcerated Worker
PO Box 180195
Chicago, IL 60618

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THE INCARCERATED WORKER



A PROJECT OF THE INCARCERATED WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

THE LAW AND ORGANIZATION

At the height of the prisoners' rights movement of the 1970s, in a case involving the right of North Carolina prisoners to organize themselves into a union, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that prisoners do not have such a right. See *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners' Labor Union*, 433 U.S. 119 (1977), which held prisoners do not have a right under the First Amendment to join labor unions. One might think that is the end of the story—the U.S. Supreme Court has spoken! Not so. The court reverses itself all the time. Remember the Dred Scott decision in which that high court held that black people had no rights that whites were bound to respect? Or more recently, the leaving of the court's "hands off" doctrine when it came to prisoner rights. Yeah, until the late 1960s the courts held that prisoners were slaves of the state and had no rights the courts were bound to respect. So what the high court holds on a given issue may be reversed by judges in subsequent times.

In the case of prisoners and our rights in relationship to the state, we can draw lessons from the workers' movement back in the early decades of the last century. Back then it was not a matter of the courts saying workers had no right to organize themselves into unions—it was worse! It was a crime for workers to organize. The government called is something like criminal syndicalism. But workers went ahead and organized themselves into unions anyway. As time passed, and the labor movement became an established fact, the congress enacted laws that protected the rights of workers to organize into unions.

We prisoners should take our queue from the labor movement of old. We should organize by cell, by tier, by cellblock, and by prison across the state and the nation. As the Nike sports shoe conglomerate advertising campaign used to say: Just do it! Let me translate that into convicteeze for you—just fucking do it! If you are about done being a slave, and you don't want to see others suffering from being the victim of state imposed slavery, then let's start the process of finally sending this crime against humanity to the dustbin of history. Don't you agree that it is way past time to address this issue? As always, you do have a vote. You vote with your feet. ●

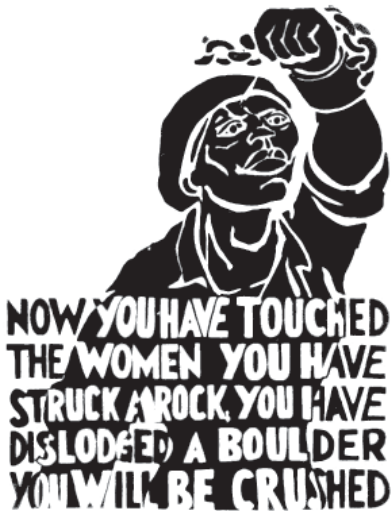
Ed Mead

POVERTY - CRIME

By Bill Quigley

The US spends \$80 billion on this big business of corrections every year. As a retired criminal court judge I know says, "the high costs of this system would be worth it if the system was actually working and making us safer, but we are not safer, the system is not working, so the actual dollars we are spending are another indication of our failure." The cost of being number one in incarceration is four times higher than it was in 1982. Anyone feeling four times safer than they used to?

Center for American Progress rightly concludes "Today, a criminal record serves as both a direct cause and consequence of poverty."



1 IN 13 PEOPLE KILLED BY GUNS ARE KILLED BY POLICE

US law enforcement officers have shot and killed upwards of 385 people so far this year, according to a new Washington Post investigation. That's a rate of about 1 every 9 hours, or 2.5 shootings per day. That's a lot compared to other countries -- cops in Germany killed only 8 people in 2013-2014, for instance. British police didn't kill anyone last year.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/06/01/police-commit-1-in-13-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

MORE AMERICANS HOLD FAVORABLE VIEW OF GEORGE W. BUSH THAN BARACK OBAMA

According to the results of the survey, released Wednesday, 52 percent hold a favorable view of Bush, while 43 percent view the former president unfavorably - the first time in more than a decade that a majority of Americans viewed Bush favorably.

<https://www.yahoo.com/politics/more-americans-hold-favorable-view-of-george-w-120609395871.html>

HALF OF U.S. HOUSEHOLDS APPROACHING RETIREMENT HAVE SAVED NO MONEY

Fifty-two percent of households of people 55 and older haven't saved a dime for retirement

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/02/retirement-savings_n_7495306.html

MORE THAN 350 PEOPLE KILLED BY US POLICE IN THE PAST 5 MONTHS

Almost all of the policemen that have opened fire on unarmed civilians have been cleared of charges.

Police in the United States have killed 385 people over the past five months, according to a report published by the Washington Post. The report was based on police records, news reports, internet sources and the paper's own original reporting. Most of victims - 80 percent - were carrying weapons or objects considered a lethal hazard, however this did not necessarily translate into the victims posing a real threat to the lives of police officers. For example, po-

lice shot an elderly man after his son asked them to make sure he was okay. The man, 77-year old Mr. Douglas Harris, answered the door whilst holding a gun, which triggered two deadly shots fired by the police. Furthermore, nearly a quarter of those killed were identified by police or family members as mentally ill, and about half of the shootings happened whilst attending domestic disturbances or complex social situations (eg.: a homeless person behaving erratically or a son threatening to commit suicide). "We have to get beyond what is legal and start focusing on what is preventable. Most (shootings) are preventable," said Ronald L. Davis, a former police chief who heads the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

RELATED: Case of Georgia Police Killing of Black Teen to Be Re-opened.

The average number of police victims stood at 2.6 per day, and at the current rate the report predicts that police will kill almost 1,000 people this year. The Post's report showed a higher number than that recorded by federal agencies, which claim an average of 400 police shootings per year in the past decade. The recent cases of unarmed people, especially African Americans fatally shot by police officers has also put a spotlight into the issue of racial discrimination within policing. Out of all lethal encounters with police, almost 20 percent of the killings were people unarmed or holding a toy gun and two thirds of the victims were black. The Post's investigation also found that only in 3 of the 385 police killings were police officers charged with murder.



STUNNING NUMBER OF WOMEN WITH INCARCERATED LOVED ONES

On May 20, 2015, the Du Bois Review published *Racial Inequalities in Connectedness to Imprisoned Individuals in the United States*.^[1] a groundbreaking article exposing the devastating effects of mass incarceration on the women who are so often left behind to pick up the pieces.

The article reports that 1 in 4 women in the United States currently has an imprisoned family member.^[2] Forty-four percent of black women - just over 1 in 2.5 have an incarcerated family member, compared to 12 percent of white women. Black women have over 11 times as many imprisoned family members as white women, and are more likely to be connected to multiple people in prison. Over 6 million black women in the United States have a family member currently imprisoned.

While the racial inequalities are striking, the number of women overall affected by the incarceration of family members and loved ones is staggering. The study makes clear that women in the United States currently have unprecedented levels of connectedness to people in prison. With men making up 90 percent of the 2.2 million people currently incarcerated, women who have incarcerated loved ones are often left raising children, managing family finances, and facing stigma in their communities and workplaces. As a result, these women are at greater risk for a whole host of harmful health and economic outcomes.

As Anita Wills, a member of Essie Justice Group, explains, In 2003, when my son Kerry was sentenced to 66 years in prison, I was devastated. I had to keep it together for my son and grandsons. I am now 68 years old and raising my 17-year-old grandson. This is not how I envisioned living my retirement years.

Terryon Cross, whose father is in prison, says, I've grown up with incarceration all around me. When my son Yancy was born, I was 16 years old. I want more than anything for my four-year-old to grow up without me having to drive to prison to see and hug our family. I don't want him to think this is normal, even though it is happening all around us.

This trailblazing article sheds light on the scope of mass incarceration's effect on families and loved ones "particularly women" and alerts us to the fact that this group

has been under-studied and often ignored. It helps lay the groundwork for a better understanding of the consequences of mass imprisonment in the United States and its particularly devastating impact on women with incarcerated loved ones.

Essie Justice Group is an organization that works directly with women with incarcerated loved ones. To speak to us for comment on the report or to be put in touch with the authors of the article, please email gina@essiejusticegroup.org. •

Gina L. Clayton

[1] The article was co-authored by Hedwig Lee and Tyler McCormick of the University of Washington, Seattle; Margaret T. Hicken of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; and Christopher Wildeman of Cornell University.

[2] "Family members" include male and female relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as children, partners, and parents. It is important to note that this analysis focuses only on people serving sentences in prison, and not those in jail. Had the article included people in jail, the number of women affected by family member incarceration would be much higher.

WAR OVER S. CHINA SEA?

By Mike Whitney (Edited for length by Ed Beijing's *Global Times*, wrote; "If the United States' bottom line is that China has to halt its [island building] activities, then a U.S.-China war is inevitable in the South China Sea ..."

The U.S. responds; "There should be no mistake: The United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, as we do all around the world." He also added that the United States intended to remain "the principal security power in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come." "There should be no mistake: The United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, as we do all around the world." He also added that the United States intended to remain "the principal security power in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come." The U.S. defense secretary Carter has threatened to deploy US warships to the area.

China has never blocked shipping lanes

or seized boats sailing in international waters. Never. The same cannot be said of the United States that just recently blocked an Iranian ship loaded with humanitarian relief—food, water and critical medical supplies—headed to starving refugees in Yemen. Of course, when the US does it, it's okay.

The so called pivot is Washington's "top priority", which means that China's unprecedented ascendancy must be slowed and its regional influence curtailed. Thus, the dust up over the Spratly Islands will be used in the same way the US has used other incidents, that is, by demonizing China's leaders in the media, by assembling a coalition that will publicly oppose China's activities, by implementing harsh economic sanctions, by launching asymmetrical attacks on China's currency and financial markets, by excluding China from critical trade agreements, and by inciting social unrest (color-coded revolution) through the support of dissidents living in China. These are the all-too-familiar signs of US meddling directed at "emerging rivals" who threaten US global hegemony. China now finds itself at the top of the list.

Obama said it best: "After a decade in which we fought two wars that cost us dearly, in blood and treasure, the United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region...As we end today's wars, I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority."

US powerbrokers know that bullying China involves significant risks for themselves and the world. Even so, they have decided to pursue this new policy and force a confrontation. They don't see any way around it. They've tried containment and it hasn't worked. China's growing like crazy and its regional influence threatens to leave the US on the outside looking in. Defense Secretary Carter says: China's presence in the area "risks America's access to these growing markets. We must all decide if we are going to let that happen. If we're going to help boost our exports and our economy...and cement our influence and leadership in the fastest-growing region in the world; or if, instead, we're going to take ourselves out of the game."

It's all about markets. It's all about money. Carter's speech goes on to say: "The Asia-Pacific...is the defining region for our nation's future." •

[Note: And then there was the Ukraine.]

Message Box

"You stand with the belligerent, the surly, and the badly behaved until bad behavior is recognized for the language it is: The vocabulary of the deeply wounded and of those whose burdens are more than they can bear."

Gregory Boyle, Tattoos on the Heart

Ronald Reagan on the Subject of Afghanistan's Freedom Fighters

"To watch the courageous Afghan freedom fighters battle modern arsenals with simple hand-held weapons is an inspiration to those who love freedom. Their courage teaches us a great lesson-that there are things in this world worth defending. To the Afghan people, I say on behalf of all Americans that we admire your heroism, your devotion to freedom, and your relentless struggle against your oppressors."

*President Ronald Reagan,
March 21, 1983*

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On Jailhouse Lawyers

"...jailhouse lawyers often unwittingly serve the interests of the state by propagating the illusion of 'justice' and 'equity' in a system devoted to neither." They create "illusions of legal options as pathways to both individual and collective liberation."

*Mumia Abu-Jamal,
JAILHOUSE LAWYERS: Prisoners
Defending Prisoners v. The U.S.A.*

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