

UNITED STRUGGLE FROM WITHIN CALIFORNIA



**California USW Primer
First Edition
JANUARY 2017**

**MIM Distributors
PO BOX 40799
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94140**

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For regular updates on USW work and campaigns, prisoners may obtain a free subscription to the newsletter *Under Lock & Key* from the address above.

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Purpose

This pamphlet was created as a tool for members and supporters of United Struggle from Within in California to document our work and provide background and guidance on some of our biggest campaigns to newer members. Most of the content is written by comrades who have participated in the California USW Council.

The first section starts with some guiding statements from the CA Council, then gives you an overview of what USW is and how we do things. The next four sections give you historical and theoretical background on the campaigns to shut down the SHU, to get our grievances heard, to protect First Amendment rights to communicate and affiliate with others, and to build a united front with all who can be united in the prison movement.

These campaigns have been our focus for many years because of their strategic significance in our long-term goals of ending imperialism. Please use this material to be more effective in your own work on these struggles. Check *Under Lock & Key* for campaign updates and submit your own progress reports to MIM(Prisons) so we can learn from each other.

To: CA United Struggle from Within Supporters
Revolutionary Greetings,

We are your comrades of the United Struggle from Within (USW) and the first thing we'd like to do is extend our appreciation and gratitude for your interest and any works in the struggle to bring about PEACE in PRISON. We know that it isn't always the most popular road to take but it is the most productive.

USW is made up of various political prison activists struggling against their oppressive conditions. Both our leaders and supporters know that what we are apart of is an on-going struggle against the imperialist state to liberate ALL prisoners. We are prisoners and former prisoners working with guidance from the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons. While we seek immediate goals to improve prison conditions, we do not lose sight of the ultimate goal of national liberation and ending imperialism. Although we have comrades everywhere there is a prison, we operate a cell structured organization and move in small strong numbers.

Here in California our conditions are relatively advanced. As you are certainly aware, a series of actions occurred in recent years to demand the end of long-term solitary confinement in California prisons. In between those actions, a number of leading USW cells began meeting to form the first statewide council within USW. Through this council we will be working to coordinate efforts and develop unity between local cells in California. We have also begun a statewide fundraising effort to leverage our resources.

Today California prisons are putting the theory of the United Front for Peace in Prisons into practice. Our Call to End Hostilities between all groups was a leap in consciousness which we seen as a necessary response to our national oppression. We seen that we cannot resist the state repression while fighting each other. We seen that warring on other poor people while our oppressor

devastates our people was absurd. The role of USW in California is to promote the End to Hostilities and further develop these peace accords in these dungeons, and on the path to anti-imperialism.

The next step we believe you as a USW supporter can make is in organizing a local cell of USW or joining one of the various projects that is being developed. We also recommend that you enroll in a MIM(Prisons)-led study group, as all comrades should study and understand political economy and the scientific method in a way that they can progress to take up leadership roles. Some people may not have the time to contribute but may want to donate financially for projects which promote peace and humyn rights and this is OK too. Getting ULK into the hands of people takes not only time but it also costs money to produce. Write MIM(Prisons) and request a copy of "Financing the Revolution." You can also submit your own ideas for campaigns and the council will present your idea to other cells across the state for discussion.

The enclosed letter for USW has a more complete list of projects that we are leading in prisons across the country. After reading this, write to the CA United Struggle from Within coordinator and include the particular projects that you'd like to work on and we will send you materials to get you started in regards to blueprints on how to begin your paper trail, and people and groups to contact, letters to write, legal filing process, etc.

Some important USW projects include:

1. Join the campaign to abolish control units
2. Expand Under Lock & Key newsletter
3. Petition for grievances to be addressed
4. Enroll in the University of Maoist Thought
5. Join the fight against censorship

6. Build the United Front for Peace in Prisons

The more work you do, the more USW will help you. We are all about Serve the People behind the wire and our sponsors support us 100%. MIM(Prisons) is the organization in front of USW providing all of the necessary resources like the University of Maoist Thought and the Prisoners' Legal Clinic, The Free Political Books for Prisoners Project and most importantly The Under Lock & Key Newsletter. Every last one of these institutions are independent of the state, aside from the U.S. Postal carriers. We do what we want as anti-imperialists.

We enjoy your support and would like to offer you a seat at the table of our UNITED FRONT for PEACE in PRISON efforts. You have more than what it takes. This pamphlet should give you guidance on what you can do to get involved. Contact the state office for additional information about USW & MIM(Prisons). Thank you for your support.

In Struggle,
CA Council of USW

United Struggle From Within
CA Coordinator
P.O. Box 40799
San Francisco, CA 94140

A Clarifying Vision

a resolution passed by the CA Council of USW
last edited Spring 2016

The vision below is structured as the core 5 initial goals of the California Council of United Struggle from Within. As mentioned in the April 2015 council meeting, prisoners come to terms only with the problem as it relates to them and forget how others are screwed by it. This was an element of the thought process behind "A Clarifying Vision," developing five very specific objective points and

guidelines stemming from a foundation of the four basic principles developed in a paper entitled "An Idea of Prisoner Organization", by a comrade enrolled in the MIM(Prisons)-led study group.

"To be organized consists of being able to have a sense of control, sanity and awareness. To be able to not only account for but be accounted for. To be able to calculate every action and reaction with precise method, seeing as how every thought manifests itself from an applied scientific method, in the case of the CA Council of USW, dialectical materialism. There is an answer for every question and a solution to every problem. We become organized in our struggle against imperialism. One step closer to social revolution and a communist advancement adhering to our strict principles set forth in the United Front for Peace in Prisons Statement of Principals: Peace, Unity, Growth, Independence and Internationalism (PUGII). We prepare for our advancement by guiding the people with our actions in the directions of power to the imprisoned people. With this understood we come to the subject of areas that must be organized on the behalf of the prison mass. These are: Education, Communication, Economics, Conduct."

The objective of "A Clarifying Vision" is to involve all USW members in the process of the council's work. The initial proposal came with a work sheet but this work sheet was more of a demonstration of how to square off the five where the council should focus USW's energy. Currently, the CA Council has adopted the chart for work reports by council members.

In brief, many prisoners don't really view the prison movement as an anti-imperialist one. If we, more advanced cadre of USW, find a way to simplify the mission, we will change this phenomenon, focusing on the fourteen divisions of labor [on USW Council work reports].

Study Group Development: Study group

development is a USW comrade either enrolled in the intro level MIM(Prisons) study group or a graduate, who is studying with a candidate at the local level. (candidates range from one's cell-mate to a yard buddy who enjoys meaningful conversation).

Comrades must build on the shared knowledge of anti-imperialism, exercising their understanding of Maoism related to prisoners using the forum of open dialogues with local prisoners open to conversation. Applying the materials mailed by MIM Distributors is how we actually find the value of these materials with others. Even simply putting the latest issue of Under Lock & Key into rotation in your facility, on the tier or circulating throughout your prison can spark meaningful political discussions. Two or more is a group, when education of the political prisoners as anti-imperialists is made the objective of all educated prisoners then peace between all prisoners begins to manifest in prisons from state to state.

Social Correspondence: Social correspondence involves USW Council members aiming fiery reviews, reports and articles at the reformist groups publishing their sideways ass lines in newspapers, newsletters and magazines claiming to represent the interest of prisoners, but who resemble more of the pimps in berets type. Until WE become a part of the conversations being held in our names, political prisoners and our groups will be outlawed as degenerates unworthy of speaking. This eventually manifests itself into or as censorship, which is what allows for much to be said about prisons but very little to be said by prisoners. There are many very popular publications that prisoners subscribe for information about the world outside themselves.

Pimps are naturally opposed to revolution, but under certain circumstances regarding prisoners, former prisoners and USW they too should be welcomed to be used. For the above mentioned publications this goes back to the CA Council's discussions on letter to editors

projects and MIM(Prisons) comment, "...for newsletters that are open to various revolutionary ideas, by all means submit articles to them with a solid political line. However, try to push them (and their readers) in doing so. Don't submit an article that a number of other [bourgeois] authors may have written similarly. Say something controversial in that forum, or use it to promote a specific campaign that the USW is building."

The CA Council will do this by drawing council statements related to particular topics, publishing these statements in ULK and submitting the print of ULK articles to the various publications like those named herein attaching a simple note saying, "Look what they wrote, directly to the editor for publish." Call it getting off where you're mad at. The NCTT (New Afrikan Revolutionary Nationalism - Collective Think Tank) does this with Prison Focus, Bayview and Turning the Tide. Communication for Unity anyone?

Artwork: Artwork is more than a viewpoint and if one can write, one can draw, period. WE draw declarations, motions and articles and a range of other pieces. The differences between these drawings and portraits is that WE don't value it enough as artwork, key word work. Even prisoners have labor power. The difference between labor aristocrats and political prisoners is prisoners have labor power, but no opportunity to sell it. Creating for them the condition of permanent un-employability. With the art projects, most of the work is done by comrades doing the drawing. Certainly there is work in copying, editing and transferring images to cards and things, but it is political. Whether one is in the SHU or county jail, there is always an artistic message being conveyed. It has been well over due, prisoner leaders like the CA Councilmembers, to begin organizing and capturing these messages to be published in line with the prison movement first, all else becoming second. Currently, the art industry that involves prisoners have prisoners doing the complete opposite. What if prisoners controlled prison art of all kinds? This, is political prisoners economic Growth.

Assemblies: Assembling is not always face-to-face or personal. If prisoners began accepting this reality they'd be better off. Too often prisoners desire fame and popularity, so greatly most times, that they'd compromise themselves for just a little. This is because of the isolation-sensory deprivation aspect of prisons. Prisoners want to be seen and heard – often times for the wrong reasons. USW and MIM(Prisons) changes the way prisoners assemble for life.

Take the CA Council for example, our meeting hall is a letter, legally printed by MIM Distributors, with MIM(Prisons) as our host. The letters are open to the public in the context that pigs read our mail, but they are private from the influence of outside groups. It is USW in its most natural independent state. Names and personalities have become unnecessary because popularity isn't what we want or seek. Overcoming this great hurdle allows for council members to be in a much greater way than if they were more concerned with people knowing their names – seeing their pictures and hearing their voice. This council is officially a voice by the right prisoners, with the right message and the right reason.

It allows for council members who are for instance in the SHU under a package to communicate indirectly with those who still hear but appear upright on the line. Or comrades wearing the cover of a programmer discretely planting the seeds of the UF4Peace in Prisons principles into the minds of their peers. From the SHU yard doggie kennels, to the level three facility Alcoholics Anonymous self-help type groups. In order for the message to get out USW has to spread it. Once the stock rises, bring in the harvest every solidarity day (September 9). This is conduct that puts into practice the principle of being internationalist.

Litigation: Finally, is the area of litigation, MIM(Prisons) said it best in an address to a former councilmember

putting forth a position of the white-wing settler state oppressor nation.

“Constitutional law is foundational to the judicial system. And while WE know that the injustice system is part of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and, therefore serves their class interest, as long as we have a functional democracy the Constitution, in particular the Amendments, will be relevant for our battles with the system.”

This council must focus on battles it will support USW cells in California and across the U.\$, where anti-imperialist prisoners are concerned. It must focus on First & Eighth Amendment struggles to address the humyn rights violations by our captives and our henchmen. There you have the good ol'boy networks spread out across every state in the United \$tates. They go from prison guard wardens, to prisoner anger management specialist, and prisoners fall for the banana in the tail pipe every time. Convinced that the beast will show them mercy at the next round of board of prison terms parole hearing.

USW must become the force behind peoples' board hearing demands to free all prisoners of the struggle, not just a choice few. This can only be done if the council focuses on legal campaigns involving exposing the code of silence, corrupted officials, officer brutality and pigs framing politically active prisoners. Here yi have completion, five squared to the second power, throw your bid on the register.

The council doesn't expect members to participate in all five areas of “A Clarifying Vision” but it does expect members to fall into an area and get to work. For comrades who manage all five areas, fire comrade, nation day a coming . The council encourages our members to try new things within the five, when circumstances allow. When USW masters its five point then it will be mature enough to throw points like a ninja :) Until then know the wisdom of the USW program.

What is United Struggle from Within?

United Struggle from Within (USW) is a MIM(Prisons)-led mass organization for current and former U.\$. prisoners. USW is explicitly anti-imperialist in leading campaigns on behalf of U.\$. prisoners in alliance with national liberation struggles in the United States and around the world. USW won't champion struggles which are not in the interests of the international proletariat. USW will also not choose one nation's struggles over other oppressed nations' struggles. USW should work independently, but under the guidance of MIM(Prisons) to build public opinion and independent institutions of the oppressed in order to obtain state power independent of imperialism. Members don't have to agree with MIM(Prisons)'s cardinal points (see above) but they can't consciously disagree with any of them.

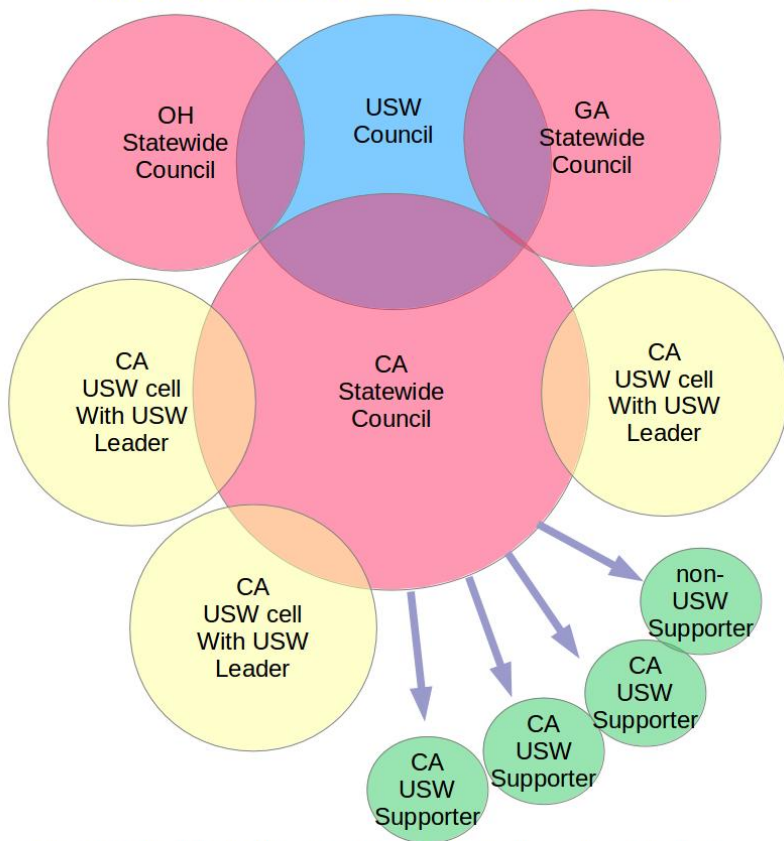
USW leader: A USW leader is a current or former prisoner who is committed to working with MIM(Prisons) to expand our influence and organizing in prison or their community. This persyn writes to MIM(Prisons) regularly with news about eir organizing work, regularly contributes articles about what's going on in eir state and prison, and spreads info about MIM(Prisons) and USW to others whenever the opportunity arises. This persyn is always looking for new ways to expand our work and will initiate and implement new ideas and share them with others. Ey is also available to have work delegated to em as needed but does not wait for assignments, taking up leadership wherever ey sees work needing to get done.

USW supporter: A USW supporter helps build USW in eir prison/area. This persyn may not initiate projects by eirself, but will readily implement requests from USW leaders and MIM(Prisons). Supporters may contribute in many different areas of work including: writing articles for ULK, producing revolutionary art, translating, sending in donations, running a study group or otherwise educating

people and building reading skills, working on a campaign such as the grievance petition, referring new subscribers to ULK, and conducting MIM(Prisons)-directed surveys. This persyn writes to MIM(Prisons) less regularly but is responsive to letters and completes work assigned within a reasonable timeframe.

Non-USW supporter: A non-USW supporter consciously disagrees with at least one of MIM(Prisons)'s six main points but participates as a USW supporter does.

UNITED STRUGGLE FROM WITHIN



Once a USW cell establishes a leadership role they are invited to have one representative in the council. States with more than one council rep will have a statewide council that provides strategic guidance for all USW supporters (and non-USW activists who work with USW) in that state. All council members should be enrolled in the University of Maoist Thought.

Consolidating USW Leadership thru Organization

by a comrade of United Struggle from Within
September 2015

[At our 2012 Congress MIM(Prisons) decided to begin the process of building statewide councils to develop USW and its leadership. That winter the work began to set up the first council in California. This coincided with a renewed round of strikes in the state involving more than 30,000 prisoners. As activism spread, so did invitations to join the council. In short time, lack of participation cut the membership back down. For about a year and a half now, leading USW cells in California have been participating in the council on a regular basis, struggling over theoretical and practical questions of organizing the prison movement. This article is by one participant in the USW California Council discussing some of the issues the council has tackled.]

The United Struggle from Within (USW) political line is anti-imperialist, as those behind the walls recognize the penal system and its institutions as an extension of imperialism. Therefore our struggles include both domestic and international issues. As a generated organism from the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons, or MIM(Prisons), some within USW have taken up MIM line while others have not yet. USW is an eclectic group of anti-imperialist prisoners working in cells, individually or in a coordinated groups through MIM(Prisons) guidance. Our revolutionary activities can vary according to each cell and location. This makes USW a multi-issue mass organization.

It is important to have USW comrades focus on campaigns that are relevant to their conditions. For instance, field reporting is universally applicable. But those

doing indeterminate SHU sentences should focus on getting policies changed or bring up campaigns to shut down control units, while other comrades on mainlines could organize a cell of like-minded comrades, set up study groups, and raise other campaigns. We can all contribute to fighting censorship and other legal actions that can benefit all prisoners if won in court.

Each USW cell works in the framework of bringing the humyn rights of prisoners to the forefront. It is no surprise prisons are swamped with internal semi-colonies, with the long sentences, new detrimental laws that disproportionately affect oppressed nations, and other practices of the criminal injustice system that contribute to the mass incarceration of oppressed nations. This injustice must be brought to the public. Comrades from USW use propaganda as a tool to reach the masses who are sympathetic or will become sympathetic. We utilize Lenin's method of having Iskra as his party's way to get the written word out to the masses by making use of Under Lock & Key to advertise our campaigns, our polemics, our developing theories, or just to expose the negative conditions in prisons. ULK is our voice behind the walls.

USW are we the cadre?

Recently there has been an open polemic in regards to USW. Is it just a mass org without a leadership role or does it have leadership influence, and because of this should it no longer be considered a mass org? Well to apply dialectic materialism to this topic I would say USW is a mass organization formed in part by MIM line. "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. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge."(1)

USW is guided by MIM(Prisons), leading revolutionary work at their location. Accumulating experience and knowledge while engaged in this work, many USW comrades aren't spontaneous in heading into revolutionary activity, as this would probably prove disastrous if a comrade knows very little of what exactly to do. For this reason MIM(Prisons) has study cells welcoming those ready for revolutionary theory education that is Maoist in content. There are even advanced levels for those who wish to continue into the ULK Writers Group, the most advanced Maoist study cell from which stem numerous USW comrades or cadres.

I use the term "cadre" for reasons of revolutionary language because it permits no dual meaning in our propaganda, and I utilize Che Guevara's definition herein:

"What is a cadre? We should state that a cadre is an individual who has achieved sufficient political development to be able to interpret the larger directives emanating from the central authority, make them his own, and convey them as an orientation to the masses: a person who at the same time also perceives the signs manifested by the masses of their own desires and their innermost motivations."(2)

It can be said that any well politicized USW comrade is a cadre behind the walls as we need not receive directives from MIM(Prisons) to know how to organize and commit ourselves to a campaign. Yet revolutionary learning is limitless and anyone wishing to engage in polemics or just learn from other comrades can do so by either writing in to the MIM(Prisons) USW coordinator, joining a study cell run by MIM(Prisons) or reading up on ULK and writing in.

The Statewide Council

The momentum created by USW cells throughout California prisons has brought us our own revolutionary council where pressing topics are discussed, and polemics, strategizing and other matters will be addressed. Through discussion and the democratic process we have passed resolutions to set the standards for USW cells joining the council. Resolutions passed so far include: time frames for when members must respond to council discussions, requirements that each cell vote on each proposal and provide justification for their votes, minimum study requirements before a representative can join the council, and requirements that each USW cell with representation in the council should put in at least 10 to 40 hours a week of revolutionary work. i.e. study, writing articles, making political art, etc. Cells are required to keep track of their work and report it monthly to build discipline.

The California Council has also built a treasury that we have used to fund bonus pages in ULK. Our council has brought forth double the amount of donations than all other California comrades during a recent 6-month period. We recently finished a California-specific introductory letter for USW that went out to all existing members in June. We have had a slow start but overall we have established a steady pattern of discussion and work.

Amongst our struggles behind the walls, we will often have obstacles such as comrades abandoning a campaign or legal battle, or who just stop checking in with the council, USW or the ULK Writers group to pursue personal agendas and leave behind their revolutionary work. Our California Council and USW are a product of work and effort by politically conscious prisoners having a strategic goal in mind, be it anti-imperialist, shutting down control units, or prisoner humyn rights reform. The point is that our goals, strategic and tactical, are to struggle through the momentum whether it's low or high!

Our focus is to work together for change and we hope our efforts, our resolve, inspires others to join our struggle behind the walls. Our struggle for humyn rights is a pressing issue for the comrades suppressed in solitary confinement, so contributing to litigation campaigns are essential but not our only venue! We need to be organized, we need to agitate and utilize propaganda as a tool in order to apply revolutionary practice!

We seek comrades who have a fair grasp on revolutionary theory. No comrade needs to be an expert, we are all still learning from each other, our USW work, and how to concentrate our USW branches through practice within our revolutionary California Council.

So I can say USW Council representatives are our cadres behind the walls, forging revolutionary discipline, education, legal assistance, study groups, etc. If comrades get transferred to another yard or prison we can expect them to do the same at their new location. And we do our work discreetly to not draw unwanted attention, thus maintaining all within USW cell security.

Notes:

1. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung Vol III, pg 119.*

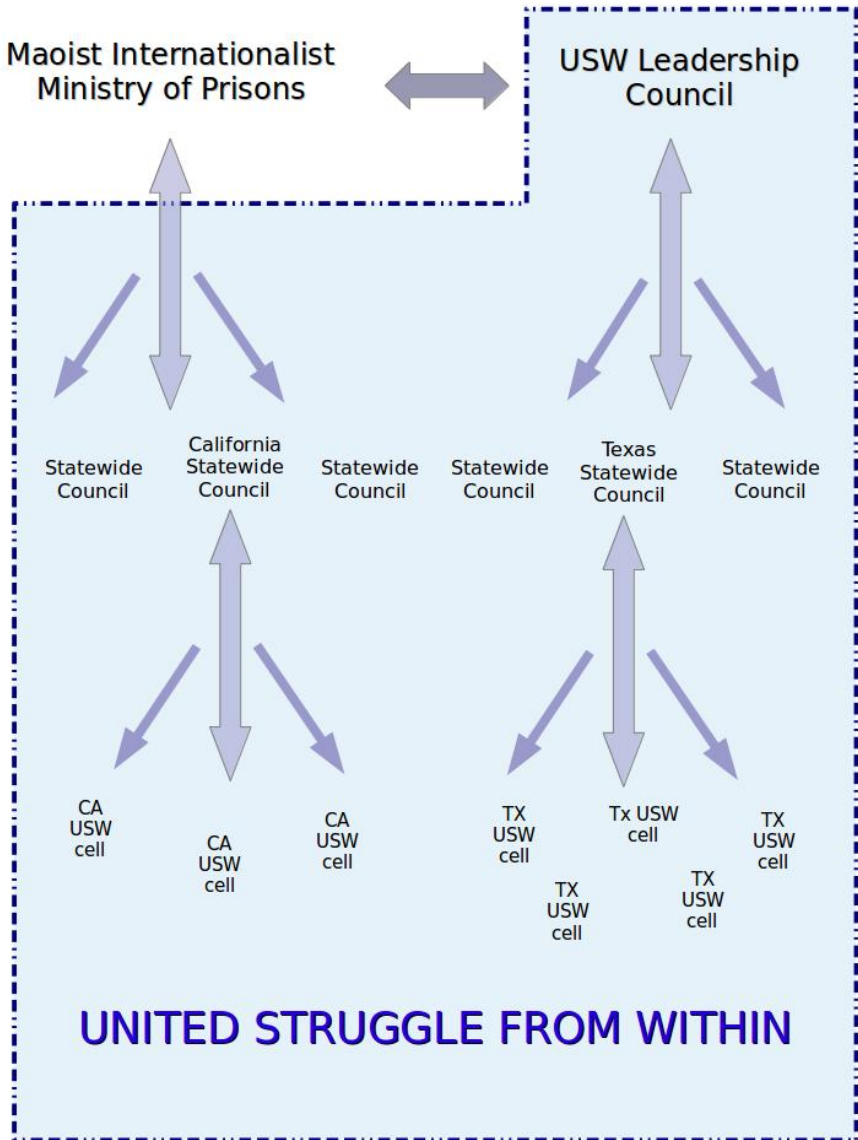
2. *Che Guevara Speaks, "Cadres for a new party."*

California Council Operations and Policies

(below is an abbreviated version of resolutions passed by the council)

Council decision making process:

- 1 vote per cell, majority rule decides all votes
- every member must vote on a proposal, and explain their vote before it can pass or fail



Council Members must:

- submit monthly work reports
- respond to council mailings within 30 days

- have passed the MIM(Prisons) level 1 study course, and at least started level 2
- demonstrated a dedication to anti-imperialism beyond the prison movement
- submit an article to every issue of ULK
- present a position essay on the principal contradiction in California prisons before being admitted

How We Develop Campaigns

by cipactli of Brown Berets - Prison Chapter September 2015

Together Against Imperialism

In war a campaign is a series of actions which lead to an ultimate aim. Campaigns can be thought of as an organized strategy in which certain steps or operations lead to the end goal of victory. Often when people are taking on an adversary, victory will not be accomplished in one shot. When the odds are stacked against you it is necessary to create a plan which, through a series of small steps, one arrives close to the intended goal. This piecemeal advancement is a campaign.

Currently the Islamic State has a campaign where it is taking ground in the area of what is known as Iraq and Syria. In their campaign they are taking over key areas like airports, oil refineries, major roads or sea ports. By doing so they have obviously decided that each of these areas will lead to lightening their opposition's hold on power and of eventually seizing power in that region of the world. Rather than focusing on overthrowing the Iraqi government outright or flooding Baghdad with troops

and attacking the "Green Zone" (the U.S. base) outright, they have developed a campaign to take smaller steps which may lead up to seizing that area.

U.S. imperialism has been waging a campaign for total global influence in which they can act with impunity. They do this by setting up 1000+ bases around the world. And they coerce countries with economic embargoes, assassinations, coups and the installation of puppet governments. Blackmail is used from information that was illegally stolen off the internet or through U.S. spy agencies. Every bit of information they obtain buys them more influence, a step forward in their campaign of destruction.

USW Campaigns

Prisoners and former prisoners within the United Struggle from Within mass organization have also initiated a variety of campaigns which address our daily struggles. Every struggling people anywhere in the world needs campaigns to address their particular needs, and prisoners are no different. For us struggling prisoners there are certain forms of oppression which prevent us from developing politically or are outright neutralizing us so we must find ways to resist and overcome them, and campaigns ensure this.

Prisoners in California have the Agreement to End Hostilities which is one of our main campaigns at this time. The End to Hostilities is an essential step that needs to continue so that our goal of mobilizing the entire prison system becomes easier. We cannot mobilize people against a common enemy if they are wrapped up in fighting each other. Stopping the violence between prisoners allows us to begin to move forward for our real interests and combat our real threats. This campaign should also spread to other states, and it will. The Agreement to End Hostilities will spread state to state just like lumpen organizations themselves have spread.

A California campaign that is also country-wide is the struggle to abolish control units. Solitary confinement is another small step in a larger process. Control units are designed to destroy our most advanced cadre; it cannot be explained in any other way. So in my opinion the control units are ground zero for the struggles of the prison movement within U.S. borders today. If we cannot save our cadre in U.S. prisons it is a huge defeat. In order to mobilize the prison system for humyn rights struggles it would be a lot easier if most of the politically advanced prisoners were not sealed off in control units.

The grievance campaign is another way that we enable imprisoned people to work toward humyn rights so that they can continue to struggle on that revolutionary path. Things like the struggle for indigent envelopes which the comrades in Texas are raising is a part of our USW campaigns because if we are able to write letters we can struggle and join correspondence study groups and contribute to ULK so we cannot be limited by the state. Just because we may not be in Texas we still support those comrades because it is a USW campaign.

Our campaign in solidarity with Palestine was an exercise in USW flexing its internationalism. When a people are suffering from crimes against humynity, even the most brutal dungeon will not prevent acts of humynity. I think our solidarity with Palestine was also a sign of our anti-imperialism. We have our own struggles in each prison against brutality, solitary, medical care, etc. We have our distinct struggles for national liberation of our respective nations. At the same time we are anti-imperialists and we know that all of our oppression can be tied to U.S. imperialism. Imperialism extends oppression around the world and creates the circumstances where Third World people cannot survive in their home countries. These people often migrate to the metropole in search of sustenance, when not contained within militarized walls.

Do Campaigns Teach the People?

Campaigns are absolutely educational. We learn from practice. When we partake in a campaign we not only realize what we can accomplish, but we also realize how to better coordinate our efforts.

The campaign does a couple of things, it allows us to battle our oppression while it teaches us different forms of struggle. We often learn new methods to struggle because of this. For example in a previous ULK I read about some comrades who, after struggling on different grievances, decided to create their own legal self-help organization.

From our campaign to raise awareness on the inside and outside the dungeons sprang the Strugglen Artists Association (SAA). The SAA is for artists to create revolutionary cultural works and for Propaganda Workers to bring these cultural contributions to the masses.

From our campaign to close the SHU sprang the statewide California hunger strikes. These actions helped to catch the eye of many within the white left who previously did not support the prison movement like some are starting to do now. From this publicity came various prisoner support groups and media struggles to assist our actions.

From these examples that I have listed came independent institutions. Our campaigns created these institutions of the people. They were created without the assistance of our oppressor enemy. It is hard to see these things develop without our campaigns, so as you can see the campaign creates even more opportunity to struggle and gives us momentum to continue on our road forward.

Take away the campaigns and we are left with nothing but isolated impulsive acts which get us nowhere but unorganized disarray. Campaigns direct our actions

toward our greatest potential.

Our Goals in Campaigning

Our goal as anti-imperialists is a socialist revolution. But the more immediate goal of USW within U.\$. prisons is to revolutionize the dungeons. This will take a series of actions, or to be specific it will take campaigns.

Prisons are merely one component of the state. But they are one of the most important components because it is within prisons where the most vital social forces are found. Prisons will produce the fiercest fighters in the future revolution.

The campaign is a military concept. In many ways it is a revolutionary war which awaits us because the oppressor will never hand over its power. According to Mao: "The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them."(1)

Oppressed people will be victorious, and prisoners, once revolutionized, will ignite and charge the people. We have seen in history the power and raw force that ex-prisoners have infused into social justice movements within U.\$. borders. The most advanced parties' political organizations and movements of the internal semi-colonies were filled with ex-prisoners and lumpen, so it is this element which must be mobilized. The people must "go deeper," as Lenin taught, to obtain the most revolutionary element which is less influenced by imperialism. Campaigns up! Conflicts down!

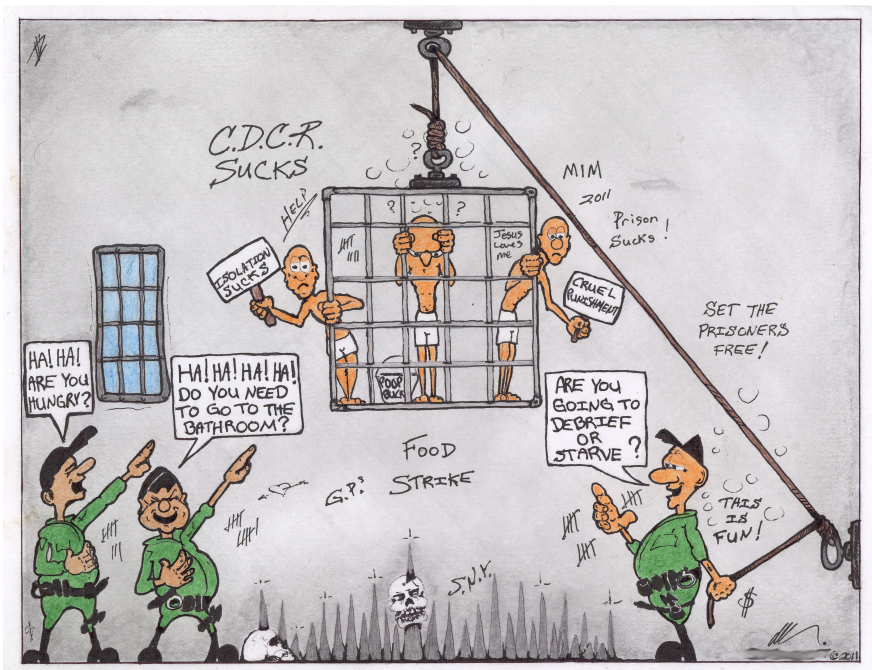
Notes: Mao Zedong, "Be Concerned with the Well Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work." (January 27, 1934, Selected Works, Vol. 1, page 147.

Amendment 1 - Freedom of Religion, Press, Expression. Ratified 12/15/1791.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**Amendment 8 - Cruel and Unusual Punishment.
Ratified 12/15/1791.**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.



SHUT DOWN THE SHU

Torture Continues: CDCR Settlement Screws Prisoners

by Wiawimawo of MIM(Prisons) September 2015

It's been over a week since we got the news on the settlement of *Ashker v. Brown*.⁽¹⁾ For a case that is so central to what we do as an organization we've taken our time to respond. We've read and re-read the legal documents and listened to the celebratory news coverage of the settlement. Yet our reaction remains the same, deep disappointment.

The settlement is a victory for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), and it knocks out one of the three main legs of the campaign to shut down the SHU — the courts (the other two being public opinion and prisoners organized around their own interests). This case had a lot of the known anti-isolation lawyers and some influential long-time SHU prisoners behind it. It was an alliance that will be tough to beat any time soon.

The Maoist Internationalist Movement, along with many other organizations, has spent decades campaigning for the end to long-term isolation in U.S. prisons. We have long countered the public who question us with, "what is your proposed alternative?" with the simple answer, "not torturing people." Ending long-term isolation in U.S. prisons would be a simple reform that unites the lowest common denominator of prison reformers. Almost everyone agrees we should end torture, and that is reflected in the ongoing movement to do so. It is only the fascist-leaning cop-lovers and state bureaucrats that oppose the call. Actually, in many states the state bureaucrats support ending long-term isolation.

Yet through all the years of struggle here in California, somehow the CDCR has succeeded in painting the ending of torture as the extreme option, with the recent settlement as the sensible compromise. But they are wrong; the extreme option is overthrowing the state and replacing it with one run by the oppressed, where the real killers and exploiters are imprisoned and taught how to live collectively with other humyn beings, not thrown in isolation. Ending torture in prisons is the most basic, sweeping reform that would actually improve the conditions in U.\$. prisons.

According to the New York Times, prison directors have become more supportive of reducing the use of solitary confinement after a man who spent 8 years in isolation was released in 2013 and went to the house of Colorado's prison chief, Tom Clements, and shot him dead.(2) Yet reducing the number of people in long-term isolation only serves to extend the life of its practice as it affects less people and there is less outrage. This reduction also suggests that some people still deserve to be tortured. That is why MIM(Prisons) has never supported measures to get only certain groups out of long-term isolation.

The Ashker settlement has been heralded as "effectively ending indefinite long-term solitary confinement" and "setting strict limits on the prolonged isolation of inmates." Yet in the actual settlement we read,

"CDCR shall not house any inmate within the SHU at Pelican Bay State Prison for more than 5 continuous years. Inmates housed in the Pelican Bay SHU requiring continued SHU placement beyond this limitation will be transferred from the Pelican Bay SHU to another SHU facility within CDCR, or to a 180-design facility at Pelican Bay. Inmates who have previously been housed in the Pelican Bay SHU for 5 continuous years can only be returned to the Pelican Bay SHU if that return

has been specifically approved by the Departmental Review Board and at least 5 years have passed since the inmate was last transferred out of the Pelican Bay SHU."

That's it! That's the extent of the "strict" limitations on long-term isolation in California. So if you're in another SHU, or Ad-Seg or some other unnamed long-term isolation situation, which about 14,000 of the over 15,000 in isolation in California are, there are no limits.⁽³⁾ If you're in Pelican Bay you must move to another SHU after 5 years. Five years later you can come back. Alternatively, you could spend 4.5 years in Pelican Bay, 2 months out, then go in for another 4.8 years, and on like that for the rest of your life. Does this really address the Eighth Amendment claim by the plaintiffs of cruel and unusual punishment? The length often cited for having serious mental affects on humyns is in the range of 15 to 30 days!

Now with the new Step Down Program prisoners are supposed to have a way to return to "a general population setting within three or four years." So the class of prisoners being represented in this case, those who have been in the SHU for ten or more continuous years, are being addressed adequately according to those who agreed to this settlement. But even moving forward there are exceptions for Administrative SHU Status, allowing people to be held as long as CDCR deems necessary.

There is one progressive concession given in the settlement: "CDCR shall not place inmates into a SHU, Administrative Segregation, or Step Down Program solely on the basis of their validation status." Additionally, "CDCR shall modify its Step Down Program so that it is based on the individual accountability of each inmate for proven STG [security threat group] behavior, and not solely on the inmate's validation status or level of STG affiliation." Finally, as a result of an ending to the indeterminate SHU sentences for prisoners "validated" as members of prison gangs, in the next year "CDCR shall review the cases of all validated inmates who are currently in the SHU as a result

of... an indeterminate term that was previously assessed under prior regulations..."

This addresses the Fourteenth Amendment claim that the CDCR was violating due process with the validation system and the use of group punishment, at least somewhat. As we saw a couple years ago, the new STG policy actually opened up STG charges to a wider range of organizations than was covered by the previous validation system. The supposed upside is that the rules require actual STG behavior by the individual to justify placing someone in SHU, not just association. Yet, in the new SHU Term Assessment Chart we see that "Recruiting inmates to become an STG affiliate" is a SHU punishable offense.

As mentioned above, this settlement seems to eliminate the judicial strategy of ending solitary confinement in California for the near future. But it also strikes a huge blow against the strongest leg we have to stand on, the collective organizing of prisoners. Turns out, under the settlement you can expect to spend 12 months in SHU for "Leading a disturbance, riot or strike", and 6 months for "participation in a disturbance, riot or strike" or "Inciting conditions likely to threaten institution security" (for those not aware, the latter was a common charge made against those who peacefully refused food in recent years to protest long-term isolation in California prisons).

They are outlawing peaceful protest, and non-violent, passive resistance for the prison movement. Americans criticize other countries that torture people for peacefully protesting the government that is abusing and, well, torturing them. How is it that leaders in the prison movement have signed on to this?

As we have previously reported, the new STG policies still give prisoners points for things like tattoos, greeting cards and talking to certain individuals. So it is not really true that you can no longer be punished for affiliation. Abolishing this practice was part of the 2nd demand of the hunger strikes.

As a result of reviews (which were mostly underway before this settlement anyway) we have a number of comrades who are getting out of the SHU right now, without having to debrief (snitch). This will no doubt be a positive thing, as we expect many of them will stay politically active in their new locations where they will have more opportunities to reach out to others. Yet at the same time we've already seen the next generation of prison leaders going to the SHU. It seems that the youngsters are getting thrown under the bus here.

So this is a wake up call to those not yet in the SHU. In July 2013, 30,000 prisoners stood up against long-term isolation, recognizing their common interests in this demand, even though most of them were not housed in isolation themselves. This was an amazing demonstration that epitomizes the progress made over the last 5 years or so to consolidate the prison movement in California. This continues to be celebrated in the form of the Agreement to End Hostilities and the countless commemorations taking place today, September 9th, in the spirit of peace and solidarity in commemoration of the Attica uprising.

As this settlement was released, public statements from CDCR celebrated it as a continuation of their plan to reform the system after the SHU successfully broke the prison gangs that had taken over. Yeah right. These prison gangs were encouraged by the state who teamed up with white nationalist prisoners to oppress New Afrikans, and later enforced the north/south divide on the Chican@ nation. The continuation of and expansion of united action around the Agreement to End Hostilities is crucial to preventing the CDCR from returning to that status quo.

Leading up to the recent settlement we had one comrade building for a new wave of hunger strikes. As this settlement does not address the most important of the 5 Core Demands, ending conditions of isolation for all prisoners, this call remains valid. And while we've always warned comrades to build outside support for such

actions, one lesson we can take from California is that such actions must be organized on the inside. Even California Prison Focus, who has been visiting prisoners in the SHU for decades, and who has lawyers with privileged access to their clients, was in the dark during the hunger strikes until the CDCR decided to pull in outside mediators. As always, MIM(Prisons) is committed to supporting the organization of prisoners and fighting to defend the First Amendment rights of prisoners (and ourselves) of speech and association. The ending of a policy that allows the state to torture people for belonging to certain organizations was a blow against the excessively repressive policies of the CDCR in relation to the First Amendment. With this settlement we find California in a similar situation to most of the rest of the country, where torture continues to be the method of choice for population control of the oppressed who do not walk in step with the oppressor.

And so, the struggle continues. Until solitary confinement is abolished, shutting down control units will be a central campaign for MIM(Prisons) and United Struggle from Within.



Notes:

1. Todd Ashker, et al., v.

Governor of the State of California, et al.,
Settlement Agreement,
C 09-05796 CW.

2. Timothy Williams, "Prison

Officials Join Movement to Curb Solitary Confinement," *New York Times*, 2 September 2015.

3. California Control Unit Statistics, AbolishControlUnits.org

CA Strike Suspended: CDCR Will Not Meet 5 Core Demands

by MIM(Prisons) September 2013

6 September 2013 — Yesterday, the Pelican Bay Short Corridor Collective released a statement announcing they had ceased their hunger strike to end torture in California prisons after two months. This came about two weeks after San Quentin prisoners had ceased their strike, announcing they'd entered into negotiations with the warden about conditions in the Administrative Segregation Unit (Ad-Seg). We do not yet have information on strikers at the Corcoran SHU, or anywhere else prisoners may still be striking. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) reported that before the Short Corridor Collective stopped, 100 people were still on strike, 40 of whom had gone for two months straight.(1)

According to the Collective's statement, they have suspended their strike in response to a pledge by state legislators Tom Ammiano, Loni Hancock and Tom Hayden to hold a legislative hearing into conditions in the Security Housing Units (SHU) and the debriefing process. MIM(Prisons) is not optimistic of the outcome of such hearings. Ammiano held a hearing in August 2011 in response to the first of three mass hunger strikes around this struggle, and nothing changed, leading to the second hunger strike that October. Back in 2003, our comrades as part of the United Front to Abolish the SHU attended a legislative hearing on the conditions in the California SHU and the validation process. They published an article entitled, "CA senate hearings on the SHU: we can't reform torture." Ten years later, little has changed. These hearings keep happening, but they are little more than pacifying talks by those in power. The facts have been out there, the state has known what is going on in these torture cells. So what is the difference now? And how can we actually change things?

CDCR Done Addressing Problems

Before we look at how we can change things, let's further dispel any illusions that the CDCR or the state of California is going to be the source of this change. In the latest iteration of the strike, an additional 40 demands were drafted around smaller issues and widely circulated to supplement the 5 core demands. On 26 August 2013, the CDCR released a point-by-point response to the demands of those who have been on hunger strike since July 8. The announcement by the CDCR cites a 5 June 2013 memo that allegedly addresses many of these supplemental demands. Others are listed as being non-issues or non-negotiable.

As to the core demands, the CDCR once again disingenuously stated that they do not utilize "solitary confinement." Whatever they want to call it, holding people in tiny rooms for long periods of time (many have spent decades) without humyn contact, without being able to go outside, without any programs to engage in, is torture. They then put forth their new Security Threat Group (STG) program and Step Down program(*) as answers to the central demands around long-term isolation and the debriefing process. We previously published an analysis of these programs exposing them as only offering more flexibility for the state to repress prisoners. In its short life, we have already begun to receive reports of prisoners being returned to SHU after participating in the Step Down program, confirming predictions that it would be the equivalent of a revolving door.

This CDCR announcement implies that we should not have hopes for negotiations or actions towards real change from CDCR. The Criminal Injustice System will not reform itself; we must force this change.

The Struggle Against Torture Continues

At first glance, the fact that this struggle has been waging for decades with little headway (especially in California) can be discouraging. However, our assessment of conditions in the imperialist countries teaches us that right now struggle against oppression must take the form of long legal battles, despite claims by the censors that we promote lawlessness. Sporadic rebellions with lots of energy, but little planning or longevity, do not usually create change and the conditions for armed struggle do not exist in the United States. We are therefore in strategic unity with the leaders who have emerged to sue the state, while unleashing wave after wave of peaceful demonstrations of ever increasing intensity. All of us involved have focused on agitation to shape public opinion and promote peace and unity among prisoners, and then using those successes to apply pressure to the representatives of the state. These are all examples of legal forms of struggle that can be applied within a revolutionary framework. Lawyers and reformists who can apply constant pressure in state-run forums play a helpful role. But make no mistake, prisoners play the decisive role, as the strikes are demonstrating.

Control units came to be and rose to prominence in the same period that incarceration boomed in this country. As a result, in the last few decades the imprisoned lumpen have been a rising force in the United States. Within the class we call the First World lumpen, it is in prisons where we see the most stark evidence of this emerging and growing class, as well as the most brutal responses from Americans and the state to oppose that class.

In California prisons in the last three years we've seen that with each successive hunger strike, participation has more than doubled. Just think what the next phase will look like when the CDCR fails to end torture once again! And as a product of this rising force in prisons, support on the outside has rallied bigger each time as well. As we said, this outside support is important, but secondary to

the rising imprisoned lumpen.

Over 30,000 prisoners, one-fifth of the population in California, participated in this latest demonstration against torture. Many who didn't strike the whole time wrote to us that they, and those with them, were on stand-by to start up again. These grouplets standing by should be the basis for developing cadre. The 30,000 plus prisoners should be the mass base, and should expand with further struggle and education.

If you're reading this and still wondering, "what is it that MIM(Prisons) thinks we should do exactly?" — it's the same things we've been promoting for years. Focus on educating and organizing, while taking on winnable battles against the injustice system. Fighting to shut down the control units is important, but it is only one battle in a much larger struggle that requires a strong and organized anti-imperialist movement. We run our own study programs and support prisoner-run study groups on the inside. We provide Under Lock & Key as a forum for agitating and organizing among the imprisoned lumpen country-wide. We have study materials on building cadre organizations, concepts of line, strategy and tactics and the basics of historical and dialectical materialism. Each of these topics are key for leaders to understand.

Organizing means working and studying every day. In addition to the topics above, you can study more practical skills that can be used to serve the people such as legal skills, healthy living skills and how to better communicate through writing and the spoken word. Prisoners are surrounded by potential comrades who can't even read! We need Serve the People literacy programs. Combining these practical trainings with the political study and trainings promoted above will allow leaders to both attract new people with things they can relate to, while providing guidance that illuminates the reality of our greater society.

Principled organizing builds trust and dedication,

which are two things that comrades often report being in short supply in U.S. prisons. Principled organizing is how we can overcome these shortcomings. It is not an easy, nor a quick solution. The opponent we face is strong, so only by studying it closely and battling strategically will we be able to overcome it.

Whatever other tactics comrades on the inside decide to take to continue this struggle against torture, the need for building, organizing, and educating is constant and at the strategic level. Without that the movement does not strengthen or advance. If you're taking up this work, we want to hear from you and we want to support you in your efforts.

1. Bob Egelko. *California prison inmates end hunger strike*, SF Gate, 5 September 2013.

*Also see: *STG Pilot Program Primer* (August 2013)

<https://www.prisoncensorship.info/article/stg-pilot-program-primer/>

(Un)Due Process of Validation and Step Down Programs (October 2014)

<https://www.prisoncensorship.info/article/undue-process-of-validation-and-step-down-programs/>



OUR FIVE CORE DEMANDS:

1. Individual Accountability - This is in response to PBSP's application of "group punishment" as a means to address individual inmates rule violations. This includes the administration's abusive, pretextual use of "safety and concern" to justify what are unnecessary punitive acts. This policy has been applied in the context of justifying indefinite SHU status, and progressively restricting our programming and privileges.
2. Abolish the Debriefing Policy, and Modify Active/Inactive Gang Status Criteria - the debriefing policy is illegal and redundant, as pointed out in the Formal Complaint [IV-A, p. 7]. The Active/Inactive gang status criteria must be modified in order to comply with state law and applicable CDCR rule and regulations [eg, see Formal Complaint, p. 7, IV-B] as follows:
 - * Cease the use of innocuous association to deny inactive status,
 - * Cease the use of informant/debriefer allegations of illegal gang activity to deny inactive status, unless such allegations are also supported by factual corroborating evidence, in which case CDCR-PBSP staff shall and must follow the regulations by issuing a rule violation report and affording the inmate his due process required by law.
3. Comply with US Commission 2006 Recommendations Regarding an End to Long-Term Solitary Confinement - CDCR shall implement the findings and recommendations of the US commission on safety

and abuse in America's prisons final 2006 report regarding CDCR SHU facilities as follows:

- * End Conditions of Isolation (p. 14) Ensure that prisoners in SHU and Ad-Seg (Administrative Segregation) have regular meaningful contact and freedom from extreme physical deprivations that are known to cause lasting harm. (pp. 52-57)
 - * Make Segregation a Last Resort (p. 14). Create a more productive form of confinement in the areas of allowing inmates in SHU and Ad-Seg [Administrative Segregation] the opportunity to engage in meaningful self-help treatment, work, education, religious, and other productive activities relating to having a sense of being a part of the community.
 - * End Long-Term Solitary Confinement. Release inmates to general prison population who have been warehoused indefinitely in SHU for the last 10 to 40 years (and counting).
 - * Provide SHU Inmates Immediate Meaningful Access to: i) Adequate natural sunlight; ii) Quality health care and treatment, including the mandate of transferring all PBSP-SHU inmates with chronic health care problems to the New Folsom Medical SHU facility.
4. Provide Adequate Food - cease the practice of denying adequate food, and provide wholesome nutritional meals including special diet meals, and allow inmates to purchase additional vitamin supplements.
- * PBSP staff must cease their use of food as a tool to punish SHU inmates.

- * Provide a sergeant/lieutenant to independently observe the serving of each meal, and ensure each tray has the complete issue of food on it.
- * Feed the inmates whose job it is to serve SHU meals with meals that are separate from the pans of food sent from kitchen for SHU meals.

5. Expand and Provide Constructive Programming and Privileges for Indefinite SHU Status Inmates. Examples include:

- * Expand visiting regarding amount of time and adding one day per week.
- * Allow one photo per year.
- * Allow a weekly phone call.
- * Allow Two (2) annual packages per year. A 30 lb. package based on "item" weight and not packaging and box weight.
- * Expand canteen and package items allowed. Allow us to have the items in their original packaging [the cost for cosmetics, stationary, envelopes, should not count towards the max draw limit]
- * More TV channels.
- * Allow TV/Radio combinations, or TV and small battery operated radio
- * Allow Hobby Craft Items - art paper, colored pens, small pieces of colored pencils, watercolors, chalk, etc.

- * Allow sweat suits and watch caps.
- * Allow wall calendars
- * Install pull-up/dip bars on SHU yards.
- * Allow correspondence courses that require proctored exams.

Setting Goals in California

by MIM(Prisons)
March 2013

In 2011, the organizing in California made connections to the plight of prisoners across the country and even globally. As cipactli discusses in eir recent article, the demands from the Pelican Bay prisoners have not been met and a new phase of that battle has begun.

The example set by those who went on food strike in California was like Rosa Parks refusing to sit in the back of the bus. They weren't the first to do it, and they didn't single-handedly change the system, or even significantly reform it. But they did serve as a prime example that continues to inspire those struggling for basic humyn rights behind bars. Since 2011, MIM(Prisons) has been in dialogue with USW leaders in Pelican Bay and across the state about those historic events, and how we can push that struggle forward.

One change that has been proposed by comrades in Pelican Bay this time around is that prisoners develop their own demands locally and hold the CDCR/state to the demands that they think are most pressing. While, ideally we would all unite around one set of demands, we agree with this tactic at this stage. There were many who came out to propose changes to the five core demands

for many different reasons. So this approach allows those who had critiques to put their ideas into action.

In practice this means each prison could have their own demands focused on conditions specific to their location, building unity within the prisoner population at that facility. We caution people though that the broader our unity behind core demands the more pressure we can put on the criminal injustice system to make change. As much as possible, prisoners should try to come together around common demands within each prison.

MIM(Prisons) is working to unite United Struggle from Within (USW) in CA around some goals that are strategic for the anti-imperialist prison movement. These are goals that could be won within the realm of bourgeois democracy and will strengthen our cause and more long-term goals.

Please note that neither USW nor the statewide councils are able to operate on the basis of democratic centralism through postal mail. So while this draft incorporates the ideas of the California Council of USW, it is principally authored by MIM(Prisons) and does not/will not necessarily represent a consensus among council members or USW in general. However, the two principal points are points that MIM(Prisons) has long held to be strategically important in expanding the ability of the oppressed to reach the medium-term goals of organizing for self-determination. So we do not believe that they will be very controversial within our circles. We do hope they will push the limits of what is possible more than what has been proposed so far.

If there are already demands in place where you are, we'd encourage you to push for an inclusion of more focus on these goals. If not you may still need to adjust the document below to meet your local conditions for various reasons. But we should all be able to agree on what the major issues are here, and the more we can speak as a united voice with a united mission, the more successful

we can be. There is very little in here that is specific to California, so comrades in other states can also use this as a model.

Here are our demands:

1. An end to torture of all prisoners, including an end to the use of Security Housing Units (SHU) as long-term isolation prisons.

Basic humyn needs are centered around 1) healthy food and water, 2) fresh air and exercise, 3) clothes and shelter from the elements and 4) social interactions and community with other humyns. It is the SHU's failure to provide for these basic needs that have led people around the world to condemn long-term isolation as torture. Therefore we demand that the following minimum standards be met for all prisoners:

- a. no prisoner should be held in Security Housing Units for longer than 30 days. Rehouse all prisoners currently in SHU to mainline facilities.
- b. interaction with other prisoners every day
- c. time spent outdoors with space and basic equipment for exercise every day
- d. healthy food and clean water every day
- e. proper clothing and climate control
- f. an end to the use of and threat of violence by staff against prisoners who have not made any physical threat to others
- g. access to phone calls and contact visits with family at least once a week

- h. timely and proper health care
- i. ability to engage in productive activities, including correspondence courses and hobby crafts
- j. a meaningful way to grieve any abuses or denial of the above basic rights

2. Freedom of association.

As social beings, people in prison will always develop relationships with other prisoners. We believe positive and productive relationships should be encouraged. Currently the CDCR makes it a crime punishable by torture (SHU) to affiliate with certain individuals or organizations. This is contrary to the judiciary's interpretation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. We demand that prisoners of the state of California only be punished for violating the law, and that there be:

- a. no punishment based on what books one reads or has in their possession
- b. no punishment for jailhouse lawyering for oneself or for others, for filing grievances or for any challenges to conditions of confinement through legal means
- c. no punishment for what outside organizations one belongs to or corresponds with
- d. no punishment for communicating with other prisoners if not breaking the law
- e. no punishment for tattoos
- f. no punishment for what individuals of the same

race/nation/organizational affiliation do unless you as an individual were involved in violating a rule or the law, i.e. no group punishment

- g. no punishment for affiliation with a gang, security threat group, or other organization - in other words a complete end to the gang validation system that punishes people (currently puts people in the SHU for an indeterminate amount of time) based on their affiliation and/or ideology without having broken any rules or laws

The above goals are very similar to the original five core demands. However, you'll notice that they boil down to two main points, an end to torture of prisoners and freedom of association. Until both of these goals are fully achieved, the struggle continues.

Over the coming months, comrades behind bars need to focus on setting goals, setting deadlines, strategizing, studying and networking. The comrades in Pelican Bay are sticking to similar tactics used in the 2011 food strike. But there are other ways to demonstrate for our goals in a peaceful way that is long-lasting and can have great impact, just like Rosa Parks. One comrade last year suggested campaigns that affect the prison staff directly and financially, and there may be other tactics to consider. As the comrades in California have stressed, networking to break down divisions between prisoners must be a focus by implementing the peace protocol across the state. And as USW leaders have reiterated, study is instrumental in raising the consciousness of participants and allies to provide for a stronger base as the struggle advances.

We've heard from comrades in Washington, New Jersey and South Carolina who are organizing their own actions for July 8 or modeled around that struggle.

Comrades in North Carolina and Texas have launched peaceful protests of their own in just the last couple months. As we address local conditions and petition institutions at the state level, we build unity around the common demands of the imprisoned lumpen class across the United States.

GRIEVANCE

Update on CA Grievance Lawsuits

by a comrade of United Struggle from Within December 2013

I have filed a petition in Los Angeles County Superior Court on the inadequacy of the grievance procedure in California prisons. I've also written letters to the California Attorney General's Office, the LA County District Attorney Office, the Governor's office and various media outlets in order to seek their assistance in forcing the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) staff to honor their own policies and regulations. All of my above efforts were to no avail.

The LA County Superior Court ordered an informal response when I filed my petition. The California Attorney General's office assumed the position of respondent to my petition and asked for an extension of time to reply to my petition, and then they failed to meet even that deadline. Before the Attorney General replied, the court denied my petition stating that I was not in compliance with the grievance procedure, despite being unable to cite a single grievance regulation that I hadn't complied with. This judicial abdication of CDCR staff lawlessness is routine in California state-level courts.

I had tried addressing the inadequate grievance

procedure in the federal courts, by way of a federal civil suit that I filed against California State Prison - Corcoran. The ruling on this was that the CDCR's violation of their grievance procedure does not create a federal constitutional violation, basically saying that the due process clause is meaningless. The case is now pending in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, case number 12-17419.

My "take-away" from my efforts so far is that in dealing with these government types (da pigs, bureaucrats, politicians, government, attorneys, etc.) in general, you're up against brazenly socioeconomically biased, unreasonable, spiteful, hypocritical, out-of-touch, legitimized sociopaths. They work together to justify clearly unlawful behavior, and are adverse to a system of legitimate checks and balances. They see barely disguised partiality, in the disposition of their duties, as reasonable and good. We see evidence of this daily. I mean, the recently exposed NSA spy program is beyond any reasonable dispute a violation of the Fourth Amendment, yet they go on unapologetically violating the same constitution that they claim to cherish, absolutely Orwellian with the "double-think."

What irritates me even more is the public's complacency in the face of this brazen tyranny by this nation's power elite. The Declaration of Independence states that it is not only a right, but a duty for the people to replace a lawless government. When will we honor that duty?

Thank you for your time, consideration, and your work performed on behalf of the people.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We agree with this comrade's conclusions, and of course, we harbored no real expectations of action from the bureaucrats' offices and courts going into this campaign. This is why we constantly stress the need to organize people around these demands. The pigs are not usually going to do something just because it's right. They are more likely do something

when they are pressured to do it. And pressure can only be applied when prisoners are organized for their common interests.

This is class struggle of the imprisoned lumpen against the bourgeois classes. When this struggle does not exist, our so-called "rights" under bourgeois democracy disappear, demonstrating that they never really existed in their own right. That is why we don't hesitate to report this comrade's failures, because they underline that important lesson. They also allow us to highlight the real victory in the grievance campaign, which is prisoners across many states acting in unison, sharing information and strategizing. Our strategies around this campaign need to keep the big picture of the balance of power in mind so that we do not get lost in an endless cycle of give and take with the pigs.

Grievance Fight Assisted with Citizen Complaint Letters

by a California prisoner November 2012

I am writing to follow up on the problems we've been experiencing with our appeals system as it relates to the mass complaint form that at least 85 of us sent to Sacramento. I went a step further and had my sister draft a "citizen's complaint letter" to the Warden of RJ Donvan. He's required by law to investigate and respond to this letter within 30 days. This puts more pressure on the Warden's office due to the time and resources involved to send out responses. So, if your readers have friends and family who can draft and submit the citizen's complaint en masse, I believe it can have a greater impact.



FIRST AMENDMENT

A Victory for Prisoners' First Amendment Rights

by a California prisoner September 2012

[The following article begins with excerpts from an article by a California prisoner, which gives a detailed historical account of relevant case law, and was originally published by San Francisco BayView. Also available on our website is the full court opinion for In Re Crawford.]

Greetings. The struggle is long and arduous, and sometimes we do etch out significant victories, as in the case of our brotha in In re Crawford, 206 Cal.App.4th 1259 (2012).

It's important to emphasize that this victory is a significant step in reaffirming that prisoners are entitled to a measure of First Amendment protection that cannot be ignored simply because the state dislikes the spiel. New Afrikan prisoners have a right to identify with their birthright if they so choose, as does anyone else for that matter — Black, White or Brown. ...

[California prison officials] have gone so far as to boldly proclaim that the term New Afrikan was created by the Black Guerilla Family (BGF) and that those who identify as or use the term are declaring their allegiance to the BGF, which has been declared a prison gang. They have sought to suppress its usage by validating (i.e. designating as a gang member or associate) anyone who uses the term or who dares mention the name George Jackson. ...

Our brotha's case *In Re Crawford* was filed June 4, 2012, and certified for publication June 13. In a brilliant piece of judicial reasoning, a panel of justices in a 3-0 decision finally reaffirmed a prisoner's First Amendment right to free speech and expression, stating:

Freedom of speech is first among the rights which form the foundation of our free society. "The First Amendment embodies our choice as a nation that, when it comes to such speech, the guiding principle is freedom — the unfettered interchange of ideas — not whatever the State may view as fair." (*Arizona Free Enterprise Club v. Bennett* (2011) 131 S.Ct. 2806). "The protection given speech and press was fashioned to assure unfettered interchange of ideas for the bringing about of political and social changes desired by the people ... All ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance — unorthodox ideas, controversial ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion — have the full protection of the guaranties, unless excludable because they encroach upon the limited area of more important interests." (*Roth v. United States* (1957) 354 U.S. 476, 484).

The programs embodied in the New Afrikan Collective Think Tank, New Afrikan Institute of Criminology 101, the George Jackson University and the New Afrikan ideology itself are inclusive programs emphasizing a solution-based approach to carnage in the poverty stricken slums from where many of us come. The CDCR Prison Intelligence Units (PIU) have sought to suppress these initiatives simply because they do not like the message. They have marched into court after court with one standard line: New Afrikan means BGF and these initiatives are promoting the BGF. In re Crawford continues,

As recently noted by Chief Justice Roberts, "[t]he First Amendment reflects 'a profound national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.' [Citation.] That is because 'speech concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.' [Citation.] ... Speech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values, and is entitled to special protection." (*Snyder v. Phelps* (2011) 562 U.S. __ [131 S.Ct. 1207, 1215]).

In re Crawford is a very important ruling because the justices said these protections apply to prisoners as well. ...

George Jackson cannot be removed from the fabric of the people's struggles in this society any more than Malcolm X can or Medger Evers or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Harriett Tubman or Sojourner Truth or Ida B. Wells, Rosa Parks or Frederick Douglass, or the countless others who've fought and struggled for a brighter future for generations to come.

What CDCR and its PIU are trying to do is make a run around the First Amendment by shielding its suppression activity under the guise of preventing gang activity, just as it's done historically, which gave rise to *Procunier v. Martinez* (1974) 416 U.S. 396, 413.

In In re Crawford, CDCR argued for an exception to the

Martinez test for validated gang members. The court declined to make such an exception, holding: "Gang related correspondence is not within the exception to the First Amendment test for censorship of outgoing inmate mail."

The fact that they even argued for such an exception shows their mindset. Their intentions are to suppress that which they believe to be repugnant, offensive and that which they believe a prisoner ought not be thinking! In their minds we have no right to think or possess ideas, concepts or vision beyond that which they believe we should possess.

Until *In Re Crawford*, these highly educated judges were sanctioning this nonsense with twisted, perverted rulings permitting a newspaper article or magazine layout or book to be used against a prisoner for validation purposes [to put them in torture cells - editor]. They issued twisted rulings like those in *Ellis v. Cambra* or *Hawkins v. Russell* and *In Re Furnace*, where the petitioner was told he has no right to his thoughts and the First Amendment only protects a prisoner's right to file a 602 [grievance form].

These kinds of fallacious rulings ought to be publicized so as to show the skillful manipulation of the law by those sworn to uphold it. *In Re Crawford* reestablishes that First Amendment protections apply to prisoners and that we too enjoy a measure of free speech and expression. We ought not be punished with fabricated notions of gang activity for merely a thought!

However, if we are to continue to meet with success, we need our professors, historians and intellectuals to step up and provide declarations that we can use in our litigation, defending our right to read, write and study all aspects of a people's history, like Professor James T. Campbell did in *In Re Crawford*. This is the only way a prisoner can challenge the opinion of a prison official. ...

Much work remains to be done, like stopping the bogus validations based on legitimate First Amendment material. We know that many individuals are falsely validated simply for reading George's books or a newspaper article, for observing Black August or for simply trying to get in touch with one's cultural identity.

These legitimate expressions should carry no penalty at all. You're not doing anything wrong, and a lot of brothas who've been validated simply shouldn't be. Nor should folks be frightened away from reading or studying any aspect of history simply because the state doesn't like its content. Judges who issue fallacious opinions permitting prisoners to be punished for reading a George Jackson book or researching your history should be exposed.

Literary content and cultural and historical materials are not the activities of a gang; they are political and social activities that we have a right to express, according to the unanimous decision in *In re Crawford*.

The First Amendment campaign continues to forge ahead, although we still don't have a lawyer. The campaign still exists, and we anticipate even greater successes in the future. ... We've cracked one layer of a thick wall. Now all prisoners should take advantage of this brilliant ruling and reassert your rights to study your heritage, Black, White or Brown.

MIM(Prisons) adds: The issue in this case was one that we have experienced first-hand as well. For example, in 2008 a letter from a comrade in California was censored before it could reach us because it discussed the New Afrikan Collective, which allegedly was a code word for the Black Guerrilla Family.⁽¹⁾ But in reality, the New Afrikan Collective was a new political organization in New York focused on bettering the conditions of New Afrikans as a nation, with no connections to any sort of criminal activity.

The first thing that strikes us about this case is a quote

from the proceedings cited by the author above, "Gang related correspondence is not within the exception to the First Amendment test for censorship of outgoing inmate mail." Unfortunately this is not part of the final opinion explaining the decision of the court, and it is specific to outgoing mail from the prison. Nonetheless, it would logically follow from this statement that anything that can be connected to a gang is not automatically dangerous or illegal.

"Gang members" have long been the boogeyman of post-integration white Amerika. The pigs use "gang member" as a codeword to excuse the abuse and denial of constitutional rights to oppressed nation youth, particularly New Afrikan men. And this has been institutionalized in more recent years with "gang enhancements," "gang injunctions" and "security threat group" labels that punish people for belonging to lumpen organizations. Often our mail is censored because it mentions the name of a lumpen organization in the context of a peace initiative or organizing for prisoners' humyn rights. While criminal activity is deemed deserving more punishment with the gang label, non-criminal activity is deemed criminal as well.

As the author discusses, it becomes a question of controlling ideas to the extreme, where certain words are not permitted to be spoken or written and certain symbols and colors cannot be displayed. So the quote from the court above is just a baby step in the direction of applying the First Amendment rights of association and expression to oppressed nation youth. Those who are legally inclined should consider how this issue can be pushed further in future battles. Not only is such work important in restoring rights to people, but we can create space for these organizations to build in more positive directions.

Part of this criminalization of a specific sector of society is the use of self-created and perpetuated so-called experts on gang intelligence. Most of our readers

are all too familiar with this farce of a profession that is acutely exposed by the court's opinion in this case. The final court opinion calls out CO J. Silveira for claiming that the plaintiff's letter contained an intricate code when he could provide no evidence that this was true. They also call him out for using his "training and experience" as the basis for all his arguments.

The warden's argument is flawed for two reasons. First, the argument is based solely on the unsupported assertions and speculative conclusions in Silveira's declaration. The declaration is incompetent as evidence because it contains no factual allegations supporting those assertions and conclusions. Second, even if the declaration could properly be considered, it does not establish that the letter posed a threat to prison security.

As great as this is, as the author of the article above points out, they usually get away with such baseless claims. More well thought out lawsuits like this are needed, because more favorable case law is needed. But neither alone represents any real victory in a system that exists to maintain the existing social hierarchy. These are just pieces of a long, patient struggle that has been ongoing for generations. The people must exercise the rights won here to make them real. We must popularize and contextualize the nature of this struggle.

California Ban on MIM Over... Sort of

by a California prisoner November 2009

A December 13, 2006 memo from then-Director Scott Kernan declared a systemwide ban on all publications from the Maoist Internationalist Movement. The memo misquoted and took out of context statements by MIM to justify the ban. Many comrades soon jumped into action

to defend the First Amendment rights of California prisoners and their outside supporters. One comrade took this battle further than anyone else, leading to over 2 years of legal battles that ended in April, 2009.

One administrator claimed there were three banned publishers in California Department of Corrections (CDCR): MIM, Penthouse and Playboy. While MIM had received this high honor of a complete ban, others were facing severe censorship by CDCR as well. In April 2007, Prison Legal News (PLN) settled their suit against CDCR's illegal censorship. The settlement was very strategic on the behalf of the PLN legal team in that it included reforms to CDCR mail policy that affected all of us that had been having problems.

As many of our readers probably know, Prison Legal News was founded and is led by jailhouse lawyers. Their consistent work has won them the ability to recruit street lawyers to their battles. Without the leadership of prisoners and former prisoners, defenders of prisoners' rights in the courtroom are few and far between. Yet, litigating from behind the walls is no easy task, as our California comrade can attest:

"The sole reason for my non-opposal of defendants summary judgment is quite simply that I was unable to litigate the case from my current residence here in the hole. As I stated to you before I was not able to obtain the required legal materials needed to litigate, materials such as a basic copy of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP), the sufficient or suitable case law required, or even sufficient copies, and typing paper.

"As I am in Ad-Seg, most of the required materials stated above are not in this building's possession, or even on the same yard. We must write to B-yard law library for requested legal texts. This is something no one bothered to inform me of 'til just a few weeks ago.

Furthermore, the whole process of requesting materials is usually hit or miss in the sense that sometimes we receive our materials, sometimes we don't. Since I'm in the hole, I had to request photocopies of the FRCP. However, due to 'copyright concerns' I did not get it."

In addition to being denied needed legal materials, this comrade was denied an appeal for a lawyer to be appointed to their case. This was particularly relevant in this case where s/he was being denied access to the materials in question because they were deemed a risk to security.

For a year and a half following PLN's victory, supporters of MIM Distributors argued that the ban on MIM mail was not in compliance with the settlement. Finally, in October 2008 the CDCR released their new "Centralized List of Disapproved Publications," a product of the settlement. MIM Distributors is not on this list, and is therefore no longer legally banned in California. It is against CDCR policy for individual prisons to institute bans that are not on this centralized list.

While the final date for additions to the Centralized List was May 1 (and it is updated annually), we have not seen the new list for 2009. Experience seems to indicate that we are still not on it, since those who continue to ban our mail cite outdated documents. Prisons that continue to return mail from MIM(Prisons) unopened are High Desert and the supermax prison, Pelican Bay. Blanket bans seem to require more stringent review by the courts. Therefore, it may be more strategic for the state to avoid blanket bans in the future, thus making lawsuits like the California prisoner's more difficult to carry out.

The good news is most prisons in California no longer have a blanket ban on MIM (those that do are in violation of court orders). This may have more to do with incompetence of the CDCR staff than a strategic

approach. But it also means that the censors must now justify their censorship based on the California Code of Regulations, and appeals cannot be rejected out of hand.

For a while, the prisoner who filed suit was the only persyn in h prison who was able to receive Under Lock Key. We assumed this was to undermine h censorship claims. Yet, after the ban on MIM was officially canceled in October, all of a sudden ULK was also censored to this comrade. When one of our legal supporters wrote to inquire as to why, the Warden cited the overturned ban on MIM. This was as late as March 2009, and the same thing happened in other California prisons. It was not until 6 months after the new list was released that prison administrators acknowledged that MIM Distributors was no longer banned. We have been assured that proper training of mailroom staff has been conducted in a number of California prisons regarding the new banned list. Still, this alleged "incompetence" has led to over 2 years of no contact with many prisoners across California, and added up to uncounted costs in lost and returned mail and printed materials.

Meanwhile, MIM Theory 8: Anarchist Ideal Communist Revolution was deemed such a threat that the court would not allow the plaintiff to view the magazine alone in h cell to prepare h case. The CDCR legal team even attempted to seal MIM literature from the public because it allegedly posed such a threat to security. In their motion to have the documents sealed, the CDCR also refers to MIM's "anonymity" as a threat to security. It is not clear to us how identities of those working with MIM are relevant to the security of prisons run by CDCR, but we do see anonymity as justified given the history of harassment and intimidation by CDCR's Investigation Unit and the CCPOA of citizens outside of prison. MIM(Prisons) takes these threats very seriously.

On June 29, 2009, the US District Court issued a summary judgment dismissing the claims against CDCR. In the summary judgment the court recognizes our

comrade's exposure of the CDCR for misquoting MIM Theory 8, using ellipses as Scott Kernan did in the 2006 memo. Still, the court deferred to the biased judgments of the prison officials, citing *Overton v. Bazzetta*, 539 U.S. 126, 132 (2003).

The comrade responded by writing,

"I am extremely disheartened by the aforementioned facts. Disheartened, not defeated, yet I see no positive outcome to the civil matter."

S/he goes on to state,

"Once again I am extremely and hopefully apologetic. It was not my intention to have done all this work for the past 3 years just to have it all come to a crashing halt in the period of three months. I have let not just myself and the movement down, but the people as well."

"Not all is bad though. This was certainly a learning experience and I definitely learned a lot for a 7th grade drop-out. I have been inspired to take a paralegal course, after which I will be of better use to MIM and the people."

For this comrade in California, it is certainly natural to feel disheartened, and it is good to hear that you are not defeated. In the imperialist countries, the task of the revolutionary movement is to carry out long legal battles. Mao said this in 1975, and it is still true today. This means that many of us will have to spend long hours learning and applying bourgeois law, while recognizing that the law has class character and is not designed to serve the oppressed. In addition, "legal work" does not just mean in the court room. An important aspect for keeping our work focused and sane is to carry it out as part of a larger movement. This comrade didn't have a victory in court, but h efforts were simultaneous to petitioning of the CDCR, to public education around censorship, to other

prisoners filing appeals, and to PLN's own lawsuit. We will face many failures along the way, but these failures become easy to accept when we study and understand the weaknesses of imperialism as a system, and see our strategic role in contributing to ending all systems of oppression.

We commend this comrade's drive to continue legal studies. The more effective each of us become in our work the easier it is for all of us to succeed. Becoming more effective requires studying others' experiences, learning from them and developing strategies as a movement.

In a more recent letter our jailhouse lawyer wrote,

"Some key points I've learned from all of this is that you definitely have to be committed when engaging the oppressors and their legal system. You always have to keep in mind that you are facing seasoned veterans with all the tools and obstacles of the state at their beck and call. It's never going to be easy, just less difficult at times. Long periods of research and study are also essential with these legal battles long before you decide to actually bring your case into the courtroom. You can also never let yourself be discouraged because discouragement is key to the oppressor's victories which in turn establishes precedent making it that much more difficult for us to succeed."

Prison Legal News and the lawyers supporting their work are the exception to the rule. Most of the time it is prisoners, sometimes with little or no formal education, as this comrade can attest to, who must fight these battles in a maze of complicated language and jargon, where you are starting out at a huge disadvantage. That is why it is important to keep in mind what we are dealing with. The u.\$. state is an imperialist state. The court is not a just and benevolent god. Mumia introduces his new book *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the*

U.S.A. discussing prisoners who have gone mad after years of learning and applying the law only to lose their just cases, or to have them thrown out before even getting a trial. Such outcomes are to be expected for the oppressed under imperialism and this is an important lesson to learn.

To our readers in California, it is more important than ever that you write in to tell us what mail you are receiving from us so that we can build on this struggle. To date, only a handful of people have acknowledged receiving ULK 10 on hip hop.

CA Prisoners, Know Your Rights

by United Struggle from Within December 2011

Comrades, here is a CDCR regulation that we can use against censorship. Essentially there are no ban lists. Straight from the California Code of Regulations:

15 CCR § 3190(i)(2) "Legal Material, including legal reference material, books, and legal pads not available in the institution canteen, pursuant to section 3161. There shall be no 'Approved Vendor Lists' for any legal publications. Inmates may receive legal publications from any publisher, book store or book distributor that does mail order business."

15 CCR § 3190(i)(7) "All publications, including books and subscriptions to periodicals, subject to section 3006. There shall be no "Approved Vendor Lists" for any publications. Inmates may receive publications from any publisher, book store or book distributor that does mail order business."

UNITED FRONT

"That is what the Agreement to End Hostilities and the United Front for Peace in Prisons are and always have been about: transforming society. Less fighting amongst prisoners is not our end goal; it is a step towards reaching our goals. These goals that have been kept from the oppressed and concealed through manipulations by the oppressor nation in this country. And that is why independence is one of the five principles of the United Front for Peace in Prisons. The criminal injustice system exists to prevent us from working together to end the hegemony of the oppressor."

California Hunger Strike Representatives Promote Peace Agreement

by MIM(Prisons) November 2012

On October 10 a peace accord went into place across the California prison system to end hostilities between different racial groups. The Pelican Bay State Prison - Security Housing Unit (PBSP-SHU) Short Corridor Hunger Strike Representatives issued a statement in August, and hundreds responded on October 10 with hunger strikes to continue the struggle against so-called gang validation and the SHU. The original statement calls on lumpen organizations to turn to "causes beneficial to all" instead of infighting among the oppressed. Recently leaders in Pelican Bay State Prison reasserted that this applies to all lumpen organizations in CDCR, down to the youth authority.

The campaign to launch a peace treaty by influential

leaders in Pelican Bay is not new. In 2000 prisoners worked with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to organize peace talks, but those efforts were sabotaged by the CDCR whose class and national interests conflicted with those of the prisoners. It is inspiring that comrades find now to be an opportune time to initiate the process without the state, which is in line with the principles of the United Front for Peace in Prisons initiated by MIM(Prisons) and USW in 2011.

We share the PBSP-SHU Collective's view that peace is key to building unity against the criminal injustice system. Prison organizations and individual prisoners across the country have pledged themselves to the United Front for Peace in Prisons (UFPP) principles and are building this United Front in their prisons, communities and organizations.

We know this won't be easy, but there is a basis for this unity and peace. As was written in the original announcement of the UFPP:

"We fully recognize that whether we are conscious of it or not, we are already 'united' — in our suffering and our daily repression. We face the same common enemy. We are trapped in the same oppressive conditions. We wear the same prison clothes, we go to the same hellhole box (isolation), we get brutalized by the same racist pigs. We are one people, no matter your hood, sex or nationality. We know 'we need unity' — but unity of a different type from the unity we have at present. We want to move from a unity in oppression to unity in serving the people and striving toward national independence."

The ending of hostilities between large lumpen organizations has sweeping implications for the possibilities for prisoner organizing. USW comrades in California should work to seize this opportunity however possible, to translate the peace agreement into

meaningful organizing in the interests of all prisoners.

Note:

PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Collective statement:

<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/>

United Front for Peace in Prisons - Statement of Principles

by MIM(Prisons) March 2011

The basis of any real unity comes from an agreement on certain key ideas. This statement does not grant authority to any party over any other party. We are mutually accountable to each other to uphold these points in order to remain active participants in this united front.

Peace WE organize to end the needless conflicts and violence within the U.\$. prison environment. The oppressors use divide and conquer strategies so that we fight each other instead of them. We will stand together and defend ourselves from oppression.

Unity WE strive to unite with those facing the same struggles as us for our common interests. To maintain unity we have to keep an open line of networking and communication, and ensure we address any situation with true facts. This is needed because of how the pigs utilize tactics such as rumors, snitches and fake communications to divide and keep division among the oppressed. The pigs see the end of their control within our unity.

Growth WE recognize the importance of education and freedom to grow in order to build real unity. We support members within our organization who leave and embrace other political organizations and concepts that are within the anti-imperialist struggle. Everyone should get in where they fit in. Similarly, we recognize the right of comrades to leave our organization if we fail to live up to the principles and purpose of the United Front for Peace in Prisons.

Internationalism WE struggle for the liberation of all oppressed people. While we are often referred to as "minorities" in this country, and we often find those who are in the same boat as us opposing us, our confidence in achieving our mission comes from our unity with all oppressed nations who represent the vast majority globally. We cannot liberate ourselves when participating in the oppression of other nations.

Independence WE build our own institutions and programs independent of the United States government and all its branches, right down to the local police, because this system does not serve us. By developing independent power through these institutions we do not need to compromise our goals.

How to join the United Front for Peace in Prisons?

Study and uphold the five principles of the united front.

Send your organization's name and a statement of unity to MIM(Prisons). Your statement can explain what the united front principles mean to your organization, how they relate to your work, why they are important, etc.

Develop peace and unity between factions where you are at on the basis of opposing oppression of all prisoners and oppressed people in general.

Send reports on your progress to Under Lock Key. Did you develop a peace treaty or protocol that is working? Send it in for others to study and possibly use. Is your unity based on actions? Send us reports on the organizing you are doing.

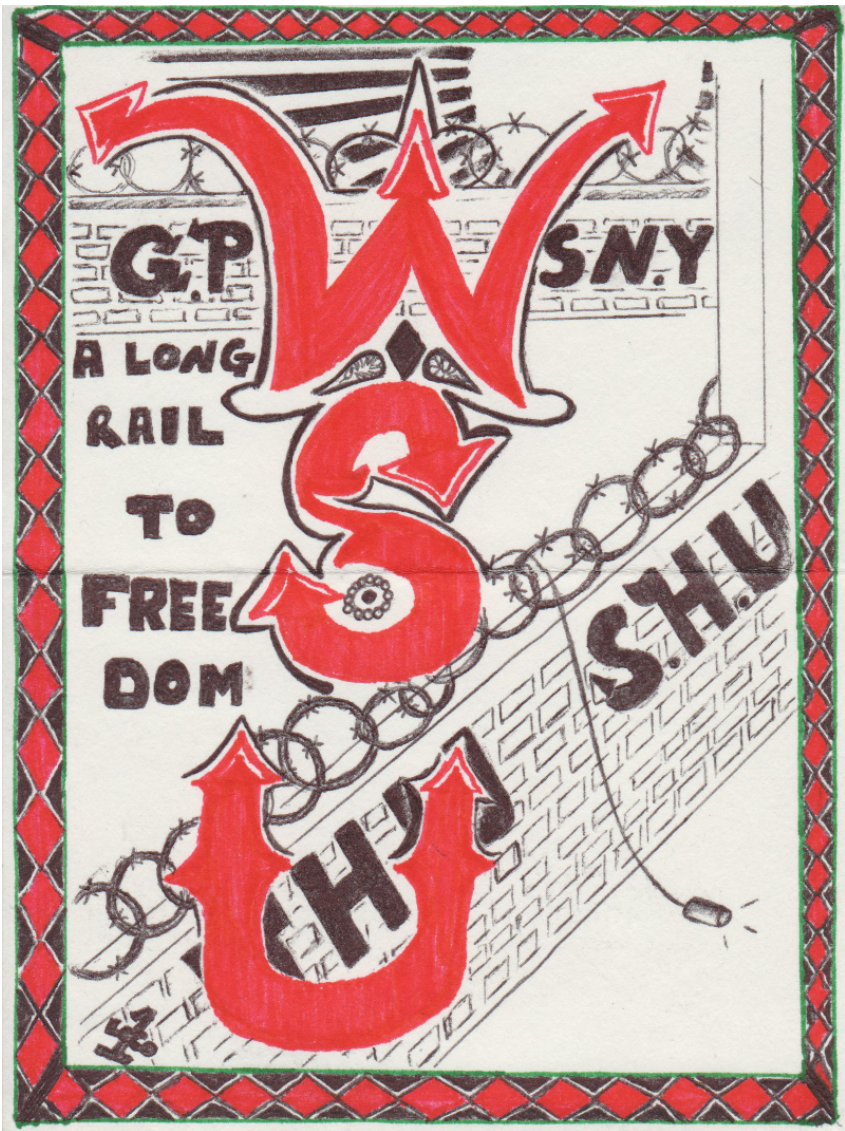
Keep educating your members. The more educated your members are, the more unity you can develop, and the stronger your organization can become. Unity comes from the inside out. By uniting internally, we can better unite with others as well. Contact MIM(Prisons)'s Free Political Books for Prisoners Program if you need additional materials to educate your members in history, politics and economics.

The Biggest Divide - Not Race, Nor Gang

excerpts from "Divisions and Struggle in California Prisons" by MIM(Prisons) September 2016 - Under Lock & Key 52

Prisons in California have become one of the most active and organized areas of resistance behind bars in the United States. With the second largest prison population in the country, and some of the biggest long-term isolation units, this is perhaps not surprising. Out of this repression and resistance has come some strong organizing efforts over the past few years. And this has also raised contradictions that need to be resolved to advance the struggle. We must highlight the contradictions and challenge our comrades in California to think broadly about resolutions.

While SHU/Ad-Seg prisoners are about 6% of the California prison population, they were 35% of our readers



according to our reader survey conducted a couple years ago. SNY are reported to be around 30% of the total population, but were about 40% of our reader responders. So while SHU/Ad-Seg are very over-represented, SNY is also seems to be slightly over-represented among our readers. There is a big division between SHU/GP and SNY prisoners with distrust and anger on both sides. But comrades from both sides continue to do solid organizing

work. One of the significant developments in Cali is the Agreement to End Hostilities (AEH), a United Front that has made important strides forward but is also plagued by these divisions.

It is unlikely anything we do or say will worsen the division between SHU/GP and SNY. Rather than fan the flames, we are airing these grievances as a step towards understanding and eventual reconciliation. We also want to challenge both sides. The revolutionary, anti-imperialist, pro-people forces are tiny in all sectors. Some argue that SNY is in a better position to unite, while others say only GP has potential. So we want to encourage a little friendly competition between the two sides to see who can do more. Practice has already demonstrated the leadership from SHU's ability to mobilize the masses for a progressive cause. But progressive forces on that side must continue to move forward in order to consolidate those gains, or risk them being lost. At the same time SNY comrades claim they gained the freedom to unite and organize with whoever they want, and so they need to use that position to unite others who dropped out. To both sides we say: if you're only seeking a comfortable way to do your time you're not helping advance the struggle and the revolution has no place for you at this time.

...Saying that the AEH is hypocritical based on the past goes against the United Front for Peace in Prisons (UFPP) principle of Growth. We must allow for growth and evolution of individuals and organizations if we want to see unity among the oppressed, because the old way didn't work. There are major contradictions between lumpen organizations (LOs) still, and between different housing units in California. But we see these as contradictions among the people. Which is why we stand behind the AEH, and think those old wounds can heal. It's been four years, and there's still a long way to go. But people are putting in the work, and in some locations we've seen real progress.

We understand the lack of trust that some have for

those calling for the AEH in California. But we say to those people, the ones who truly want to end oppression as this comrade does, isn't the AEH a step towards what you want? Even if you don't trust certain individuals, the more we do to promote the spirit of the AEH, as well as the principles of the UFPP, the closer we get to replacing the old order with a new order based on unity of the oppressed.

[Below is the first article we put out really addressing the SNY/GP divide. Since then the debate has raged in the pages of ULK. We don't have space to print all the viewpoints here, but checkout back issues of ULK for much more on this topic.]

Security in the prison movement

by D12 of MIM(Prisons) March 2010

In a system where the threat of torture by long-term isolation and other forms of repression constantly hangs above the heads of those who hold political views different from their captors, security is a vital question. Of course, the threat is different when working outside anonymously with MIM(Prisons) than working inside, face-to-face. Repression inside prisons is much more imminent than it is for our comrades on the streets. In prison, conditions are different and freedoms are limited, leaving comrades with much different tactics to choose from.

Strategically, however, the question of security behind bars is more the same than it is different from on the streets. Semi-underground organizing is an example of a universal strategy for operating behind enemy lines. The practice of semi-underground organizing recognizes that just because you didn't break any laws doesn't mean you will not face repression for your actions or beliefs, and

there is more cost than benefit of putting all your cards on the table. On the organizational scale, semi-underground can be applied by layering your organization with different levels of openness. This makes it harder for the pigs to pinpoint leaders and isolate an organization.

Another strategical question is, how do we deal with potential infiltrators who join our ranks in order to gather information and create disruption, or bad-jacket the organization? Many comrades have provided suggestions for how to address this issue. There is a bourgeois approach to security and there is a proletarian approach. The difference between the two is still generally applicable even in different organizing conditions, and is discussed below.

A key issue that is being raised in California is, why work with prisoners who are on Special Needs Yards (SNY)? This is a good question since a lot of potential comrades, as well as comrades already in the struggle, have contempt for individuals who collaborate with the state. It is important that we understand that not everyone on SNY is there because they debriefed or snitched. Some people are on SNY because they are victimized on mainline, or don't want to participate in the typical bullshit that comes with mainline for whatever reason. So not everyone on SNY is there because of piggish behavior, but the rest of this article is a discussion of those comrades who are.

MIM(Prisons) is a prison ministry that seeks to organize and educate prisoners not just to see the inhumane conditions that they find themselves in, but also to see the bigger picture of imperialism. When you read what MIM has put out regarding our security practices then one should be able to gain a perspective as to why MIM(Prisons) operates the way it does. What good would it do for MIM(Prisons) to only work with people based on the fact that they haven't snitched yet? Everyone is a possible cop or agent working for the imperialists. In fact, in this country, someone is more likely to be a cop or spy

than to be a revolutionary of some sort. Even within the communist movement itself there exists a capitalist arm in the form of cops, agents, snitches, and collaborators with the imperialists.

We see this as a line struggle. Anyone can pretend to be USW inside, just like anyone can pretend to represent MIM(Prisons) or Maoism. If they uphold the line set forth by the vanguard organization and/or movement, then they're out there working to advance the struggle. If they are upholding a bourgeois line, and people cling to it, then the people didn't understand the vanguard line in the first place. We should work with a comrade because they have the correct line, not because they are on mainline.

Why should they be barred from being a communist if they have snitched in the past? Why should anyone not have the right to see the liberation of their people, nation, the oppressed? What matters most is what one does after they have discovered themselves as a communist revolutionary. It's not just the lumpen who are reforming criminals, they mostly did small-time stuff. All amerikans are reforming criminals who have robbed from and victimized the majority of the world. If we are recruiting in the united \$tates, we are attempting to reform criminals into communists, and this is the revolutionizing of humyns that must take place in conjunction with the revolutionizing of the economy and all the institutions that serve it.

The other side of this is that even if one is a cop, gathering info, there's really not that much they will find if information is given out on an as-needed basis. When the movement is organized into isolated cells, they may be able to take down one or two people, but the struggle goes on. In the meantime, the cop had to put in a lot of genuine work in order to get the little information they got. Particularly where communists are the minority, the cop ends up doing more work for us than against us. This structure is part of what being a semi-underground

organization means.

Of course, the fact that the state has taken the time to infiltrate and try to eliminate a group says a lot about the group's politics. As Marxist-Leninist-Maoists, we put forth revolutionary science, or dialectical materialism. A concrete historical analysis shows that it is not WE but THEY, the imperialists, who are on the wrong side of history. They will lose eventually. Our struggle is a protracted (scientific) one, to put forth the correct line, so even if MIM(Prisons) goes down there will still be others with the tools to continue forward.

With regards to the prison movement, it's understandable that these criticisms arise due to the fact that SHU placement falls on those who organize for better or for worse. So why does MIM(Prisons) support prisoners who walk away from their lumpen organizations? The lumpen class, by definition, is a parasitic class. Both the lumpen and the imperialists are capitalists whose material wealth comes from others' work. One has the power to exploit by making the laws, while the other makes money outside the law in an underground economy with a law unto itself. Saying, "I understand the LOs need work, but why work with those who walk away?" is just like the bourgeoisie saying "I know we need work, but why give opportunities to prisoners or criminals to help out, they broke our law?" Just like people who walked away and are now on SNY, they too broke the law.

Divide and conquer is a tactic used by the administration to bring down revolutionary groups and to keep revolutionary groups from forming. Evidence suggests that LOs are purposefully put up against each other in order to bring each other down. This basically means that if you're in an LO that's victimizing other oppressed people, then you are unwittingly an agent of the state's oppressive apparatus. Even if you say "fuck the k9s" or "fuck the administration," your actions are counter-revolutionary.

A serious revolutionary will not determine to not work with someone who's never had revolutionary politics or training just because when that person was in a LO they engaged in the debriefing process. A "revolutionary" that snitches is very different from someone who is put between a rock and a hard place of working with one of two organizations that are both engaged in anti-people activity. Plus, you never know who could be dropping kites on you. Just because someone exposes themselves to you doesn't mean they're the only threat on the mainline.

For the LOs to put an end to snitching among their membership, they will have to stop engaging in activities that might cause someone with love for their people to break ranks. When your practice does not coincide with the line you put out, discipline will fail, no matter how brutal it might be. The vanguard cannot water down its politics just to let everyone know we're cool. Watering down politics is engaging in opportunism and will ultimately destroy the vanguard.

Another suggestion that has come up is that we look at people's histories, where they've been locked up and why they were sent there, as part of our intelligence gathering. This amounts to trusting the lumpen as long as the imperialists (or their petty-bourgeois bureaucrats) can vouch for them. This is a backwards and dangerous approach to security. The bourgeois approach to security is based on intelligence gathering and psychologizing individuals, while the proletariat must look to political line and consistent practice.

Notes:

see MIM's 2005 Congress: Resolutions on Cell Organization for more discussion of the cell structure, why personal histories are irrelevant and security theory in general.

MAC/IAC: Working for the People or Working for the Pigs

by Ehecatl of United Struggle from Within June 2015

Many prisoners view the organization formerly known as the Mens Advisory Council (MAC), now known as the Inmate Advisory Council as servants of the people behind prison walls. Most of the people believing this fallacy are the new or relatively newer and younger prison population, and even some older prisoners who should really know better by now. However, for those of us who do know better we not only know the true limitations of the MAC but their true purpose within these walls, and so it's not for nothing that some of us refer to the MAC organization for what it really stands for: "Man Against Convict."

The original idea for what came to be known as the Mens Advisory Council can be traced back to the turbulent 60s and 70s inside of California prisons and the violent years that followed which included a relatively high number of staff assaults, prisoner-on-prisoner violence, and both peaceful and violent protests. The Council was initially conceived of by socially conscious prisoners as a way to not only encourage and develop dialogue between prisoners themselves to avert unnecessary violence between the white, Chican@, New Afrikan and First Nations, but also as a way to develop this same dialogue between prisoners and the prison administration. In this way then the precursors to the MAC were meant to function not only as representatives of the prisoner population with prison administrators, but as advocates of prisoner rights.

And for some years this precursor to the MAC org did what they set out to do, maintaining both a level of favorable and positive bias towards the prisoner population as well as enjoying a righteous level of credibility amongst prisoners themselves. Both the

precursor to the MAC organization as well as the MAC itself tackled issues ranging from visiting policy and procedure, to basic hygiene and sanitation issues, to quantity and quality of food, to how our mail was to be properly handled.

As time went on however the MAC went from an organization representing the interests of the prison population as a whole to being co-opted by the powerful lumpen chiefs and representing their narrow and counter-productive interests, from which it was then taken and turned into an organization working in the interests of prison administrators. Today the IAC functions as an extralegal means for prison administrators to get from us exactly what they want, which is a highly passive and compliant prisoner population. As such, the MAC/IAC organization has become just another tool of the prison administration used to control us not unlike the tools on a pigs belt; like the pepper spray they use to gas us, or the batons they beat us with — just another tool.

I would like to take this concept even further. One can even liken a MAC rep to a neo-colonial ruler in the Third World who, thru their representation in government, gives the illusion of independence and a real self-determination to their compatriots; a nominal independence or a fictitious level of power. This is not to say that the MAC/IAC never get anything done or accomplish anything for us. Quite the contrary, they do manage to accomplish a small victory from time to time. But prisoners get it twisted when they begin to believe that the MAC/IAC reps are there to serve or win anything for us. We must be clear about one thing here, the MAC reps accomplish nothing for us that the administration doesn't allow them to. In other words, in the battle for prisoners' rights, prison administrators do not lose to the MAC/IAC, rather they concede. Concessions in the prison realm are "necessary evils" to prison administrators as they are used to lend a level of legitimacy to the MAC/IAC org and hence continue their support from the wider prisoner population. Just like the system of neo-colonialism in the

Third World, nominal leaders are allowed to govern and rule exactly because the imperialists allow them to, but these leaders must also have the support of the masses so that they may keep on ruling, or else the entire system collapses.

Surely there will be some who want to consider my allegations to be untrue, but it is hard to argue with my thesis when you see the MAC/IAC reps actively working against you. All you have to do is look closely at your MAC/IAC reps and ask them, what have they done for you lately? What oppressive and repressive policies have they helped the pigs peacefully implement and transition to with or without prisoners' consent? Not for nothing that a lot of the MAC/IAC reps are flat out hustlers and silver-tongued liars looking to swindle you out of your rights and privileges. Indeed if we look closely at these MAC/IAC reps we can see that they are messenger boys and running dogs to the administration because they have to be.

This is not to say that all MAC/IAC reps are bad. Of course there are some who actually seek out and take up these positions because they are truly interested in bringing positive change to the oppressed prison population, but these people are few and far between. These people however are also naive because they actually believe that they can bring real change to the prison environment thru steady reform, therefore they can also be some of the most convincing and legitimizing aspects of this oppressive prison apparatus and hence the most lethal to the prison movement for they will try the hardest to convince you of working within the system.

For those of you still not convinced of what I'm talking about, let's examine CCR Title 15, Article 3, Inmate Councils, Committees and Activity Groups 3230. Establishment of Inmate Advisory Councils:

(a) Each warden shall establish an inmate advisory council which is representative of that facility's inmate ethnic groups. At the

discretion of the warden, subcommittees of the council may also be established to represent sub-facilities or specialized segments of the inmate population.

...

(2) The council shall operate only under the constitution and by-laws as prepared by the council's inmate representatives with the advice and guidance of designated staff and approved by the warden.

...

(d) Inmate advisory council representatives shall not, as a council representative, become involved with inmate appeals unless the matter affects the general inmate population and such involvement is authorized by the warden.

...

(h) A staff person at the level of a program administrator or higher shall be designated as the inmate advisory council coordinator.

(i) Facility captains shall be directly involved in council activities within their respective programs and may delegate specific aspects of supervisor, direction and responsibilities for council activities within their unit to subordinate supervisors.

Now let's look at what is described as the decision making process in matters of foreign policy on an international level and the general rules and concepts of how a strong nation (namely Amerikan imperialism) interacts and deals with weak nations (those in the periphery):

"The structure of a decision making process — the rules for who is involved in making the decision, how voting is conducted, and so forth

— can affect the outcome, especially when a group has indeterminate preferences because no single alternative appeals to a majority participation. Experienced participants in foreign policy information are familiar with the techniques for manipulating decision making process to favor outcomes they prefer. A common technique is to control a group's formal decision rules. These rules include the items of business the group discusses and the order in which proposals are considered ... Probably most important is the ability to control the agenda and thereby structure the terms of debate."(1)

Foreign policies are thus described as

"the strategies used by governments to guide their actions in the international arena. Foreign policies spell out the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given relationship or situation as well as the general means by which they intend to pursue those objectives....States establish various organizational structures and functional relationships to create and carry out foreign policies. Officials and agencies collect information about a situation through various channels; they write memorandums outlining possible options for action; they hold meetings to discuss the matter; some of them privately outside those meetings to decide how to steer those meetings. Such activities, broadly defined are what is meant by the foreign policy process."(1)

The Machiavellian implication of all this is all very apparent then, and one must be a special kind of naive to not see the resemblance between imperialist foreign policy and how prison administrators choose to deal with the prison population; the majority of whom come from the oppressed nation lumpen.

Amerikan imperialism is hostile to the oppressed global majority and their foreign policies are reflective of this hostility. Likewise prison administrators' dealings with the prison population mirrors Amerikan foreign policy exactly because prisons are extensions and tools of national oppression and social control, and so it is logical and to be expected that Amerikan foreign policy and the policy of prison administrators are two sides of the same oppressive coin. Whereas one deals with the oppressed nations on an international level, the other deals with the oppressed nations on a domestic level. Furthermore, as a matter of foreign policy U\$. borders are the structures used to keep Third World workers out and unable to gain access to their portion of wealth stolen by U\$. imperialism, whereas prisons are used to keep the oppressed nation lumpen in their place and away from this same global metropolis.

It has been said many times before, prison is a microcosm of society and it is time we begin to actively engage in this society. Marxist philosophy holds that we are all products of our environment and just as our environment has the power to influence and mold us, so do we have the power to influence and mold this same environment. We shouldn't be relying on individuals or small cliques of people to speak and act for us. We should rely on ourselves and our sheer numbers to bring change. Therefore, it is time that this whole business of MAC/IAC reps be done with and put to an end. It would be a positive qualitative development for the prison masses to begin relying on themselves. Individuals don't make history, the masses do.

Notes:

1. *International Relations*, Goldstein and Pevehouse. Pearson Longman publications, p.139.

Patriotism or Internationalism:

A message to the left wing of USW

a resolution passed by the CA Council of USW
March 2016

This is a question which all communists must ask themselves at one point or another of their revolutionary careers. Furthermore, it is a question which has essentially dominated the International Communist Movement (ICM) ever since that movement became a real contender on the world stage. Suffice to say that there has never in essence been a more important question to ask and correctly answer within the ICM itself other than patriotism or internationalism? That said, the concepts of patriotism and internationalism are not mutually exclusive phenomena forever separated by the same great impassable divide of ideological difference, rather, patriotism and internationalism as properly understood by communists are dialectically interconnected concepts that we must struggle to unite.

Sometimes general, sometimes particular, but always of universal importance, the concepts of patriotism and internationalism represent different aspects of the subjective forces whose task it is to carry out revolution both at home and abroad. Focus too much on one and you run the danger of making an ultra-left mistake. Focus too much on the other and you will not only be committing a tactical mistake, but will be guilty of committing a right opportunist error. What comrades must understand however is that pushing the revolutionary vehicle towards a bright communist future isn't necessarily about making the decision of patriotism or internationalism. It's about both. This is the topic which the following essay will attempt to explain. Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism — but are there other ways for us to apply internationalism within nation-specific projects?

Contrary to how this quote has been narrowed down by some comrades, applied internationalism isn't only about each nation fighting their own battles and hoping that anti-imperialists from other nations will be astute enough to recognize the tactical opportunities of our fight and hence get in where they fit in. Internationalism is about extending our hands and providing assistance to our comrades whenever we can and offering lesser but equally important means of support when other avenues of help have been closed off to us.

Point in fact, MIM(Prisons) can't physically and persynally reach out to every prisoner on a one-on-one level. But it has a bi-monthly newsletter that goes out to the prison masses as well as a Free Books to Prisoner Program, a website created in part to help facilitate the needs of prisoners across the United States and document abuse. It runs study groups and most recently help put out *Chican@ Power and the Struggle for Aztlán*, a book that will help to build public opinion for revolution in North America by agitating in favor of the Chican@ masses. Not to mention the other nation-specific and internationalist projects which it has been responsible for spawning.

Another excellent but largely forgotten and ignored example of applied internationalism being practiced outside of a nation's own borders is how the Cuban masses under the leadership of Fidel Castro volunteered to cross the Atlantic to fight alongside the Angolan people in their struggle of national liberation against Portuguese and Amerikan imperialism. This act took place for a variety of reasons, but perhaps none more important than the sheer anger, disgust and solidarity which Cubans felt at the sight of imperialist bombs falling on Angolan heads. It could then be said that this sacrifice on behalf of the Cuban people marked a development as well as a leap in the revolutionary consciousness of the Cuban nation, both because they were willing to give up their lives in the service of another oppressed nation and because with their sacrifice they helped land such a

strong and decisive blow against colonialism, while simultaneously helping to detach Angola from the imperialist framework. It could therefore be said that this action on behalf of the Cuban masses was equally, if not more significant than the Cuban revolution itself. This is just another reason why Cuba holds such a special place in the revolutionary hearts of oppressed people everywhere.

This now brings us to a recent debate initiated within the California Council concerning USW's potential contribution to a certain nationalist project, and a certain comrade's apprehensions/objections about the role of USW vis-a-vis the national liberation struggles of the oppressed internal nations, as well as the exertion of influence on USW by revolutionary nationalists operating within that organization. In eir argument the comrade in question took the position that no one nation should be forced to take part in another nation's struggles, citing that this would be tantamount to one nation co-opting others to do its job for them. That said, no nation should be allowed to control another nation's destiny or make decisions for other nations that are integral to the liberation of the latter as this would in effect mark the beginnings of a neo-colonial relation on a certain level. Furthermore, the comrade also made the statement that "USW is not one nation united, it's multi-national." Now this may be true, but the correct definition for USW is the following:

"USW is explicitly anti-imperialist in leading campaigns on behalf of prisoners in alliance with national liberation struggles in the United States and around the world. USW won't champion struggles which are not in the interests of the international proletariat. USW will also not choose one nation's struggles over other oppressed nations struggles."

And from the pamphlet The Fundamental Political Line of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons:



"Rebuilding the anti-imperialist prison movement means uniting all who can be united around the common interests of the U.\$. prison population in solidarity with the oppressed people of the Third World..."

So while we should definitely be in agreement that no nation should be forced to participate in another nation's struggles and that no one nation should be allowed to come up at the expense of another, this does not in any way mean that USW, or the California Council in particular, should be disallowed from initiating proposals and passing resolutions that will support and lend assistance to nations or nation-specific organizations represented within or outside of USW. The nation in question can either accept the assistance or not. This method of action and participation will ensure that USW retains its United Front mass organization character by preserving the unity and independence of all USW comrades and affiliated organizations. Indeed, USW, like all other organizations, has a dual character. Unlike most other organizations however USW's duality is complementary and it is not an antagonistic contradiction. While it is true that USW is a mass organization created to represent and fight for the common interests of all prisoners as a distinct social group, it is also a launch pad for the national liberation struggles of the oppressed internal nations in which comrades can cut their teeth thru revolutionary organizing, and from where they can then go on to initiate and lead national liberation struggles on behalf of their own respective nations.

This is what USW, as an anti-imperialist prisoner organization, should be about: the internationalism of prisoners breeding revolutionary nationalism, and revolutionary nationalist projects breeding internationalism amongst the prison masses. This requires more than each nation blindly going its own separate way. It requires unity of action and unity of discipline. As such, it would seem then that what we have here with the comrade in question may be a problem of perspective. What some might see as internationalism others might perceive as a contradiction. What some regard as mutual assistance others will call co-optation. For those of us having this problem of "perception" however, we would be wise to be cautious not to let our own love for our

nations blind us to the plight of others, as sometimes what this fear of "co-optation" really translates to is our own fear or refusal to participate in another nation's struggles. Thus, we should be aware of how our own nation's struggles, as well as our failure to act on behalf of other nations, can affect the ICM, lest we degenerate to the level of narrow nationalism.

Since this question of whether or not USW should participate in a variety of nation-specific struggles seems to be one rooted in perception, let us take a closer look at the supposed pimping of nations that would take place if USW were to decide to work in the interests of a distinct national project. As has been the current practice thus far, nowhere at all has this resulted in one nation's struggle being taken up to the detriment of another. But let's just suppose that this is the case, then maybe ULK should just stop featuring articles that promote the struggle of one nation or another so that we may ensure that no comrades from any nation feel as if they're being pushed into the background, or that their nation-specific article is forced to share space on the pages of an internationalist forum that also represents one nation or another, lest these comrades begin to feel "co-opted."

Just because Mao Zedong said that in wars of national liberation the nationalism of the oppressed nations is applied internationalism, it does not justify our lack of adherence to other internationalist principles. This is a guiding line of real communism and should likewise be seen as a line of demarcation for all revolutionary nationalists claiming the mantles of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. Applied internationalism is about more than just fighting your own nation's struggles and we should never forget that. To give an additional hystorical example, when Amerikan imperialism attacked Vietnam the People's Republic of China aided the Vietnamese by providing all types of supplies including food, money and intelligence. Most activists of the time believed this was not enough and that the Chinese should've provided troops as well. We wonder what the previously mentioned

comrade would think about this? Perhaps ey would say it was too much and that the Chinese were already guilty of co-opting Vietnam's national liberation struggle and how dare anyone suggest that the Chinese become more involved? Of course, in a possible revolutionary future we can even envision a myriad of situations in which the internal semi-colonies will be forced to coordinate and work shoulder-to-shoulder to oust Amerikan imperialism from their territories. Or would this too be a case of one semi-colony co-opting the struggle of another?

The Palestinian campaign initiated by USW last year is yet another internationalist project that is now shadowed by question marks, at least according to that one comrade's perspective. Perhaps this was simply incorrect practice and "a waste of USW's time"? As previously stated, while we agree that no nation should be forced to contribute to another nation's struggles, we also believe that no comrade should feel as if they're being "forced" to participate in another nation's struggles. As such, maybe these type of people aren't so much for internationalism as they sometimes claim to be? Because Mao accomplished and wrote so much on the national liberation struggle of China many have erroneously come to believe that ey was a nationalist first and a Marxist-Leninist second; but this view is wrong. Mao loved eir nation but ey was a Marxist-Leninist first and foremost who recognized the liberation of China as only a small component in the global struggle for communism.

Choosing and deciding what internationalist struggles one can participate in besides those that are explicitly national liberationist exclusive to one's own is both a tactical and strategical question that is dictated by the struggles and conditions of the time. Lacking a clear and coherent reason why not to participate is indicative of a national chauvinist political line in command. The USW Palestine campaign was a fairly easy campaign to initiate due to the current stage of the struggle and most USW comrades' material conditions. Other struggles will take more time and consideration to implement, while some

might be outright out of the question. Excluding the labor aristocracy, there is a reason why revolutionaries from Marx to Mao championed the slogan: "workers of all countries unite!"

We struggle for the liberation of all oppressed people or we don't struggle at all.

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PO Box 40799
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