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Publication of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

Overcoming Release Challenges

by Release Coordinator of MIM(Prisons)
January 2012

There are two specific challenges we face with our comrades who get out of prison and want to stay politically active. First, the difficulties of balancing work, school, politics and general home life. Second, the overlap between friendship and politics. It is important that we address these challenges to help our comrades follow through on their pledges to serve the people after gaining their freedom.

So far we have been less than successful in this regard, and many comrades fall out of touch with us, only to re-emerge when they are locked back up months or years later. In a country with such a relatively low number of active, committed anti-imperialists, losing these comrades to the streets is a significant blow to our work. As we expand our Re-Lease on Life Program, we are working to address specific challenges with life on the streets in the belly of the beast.

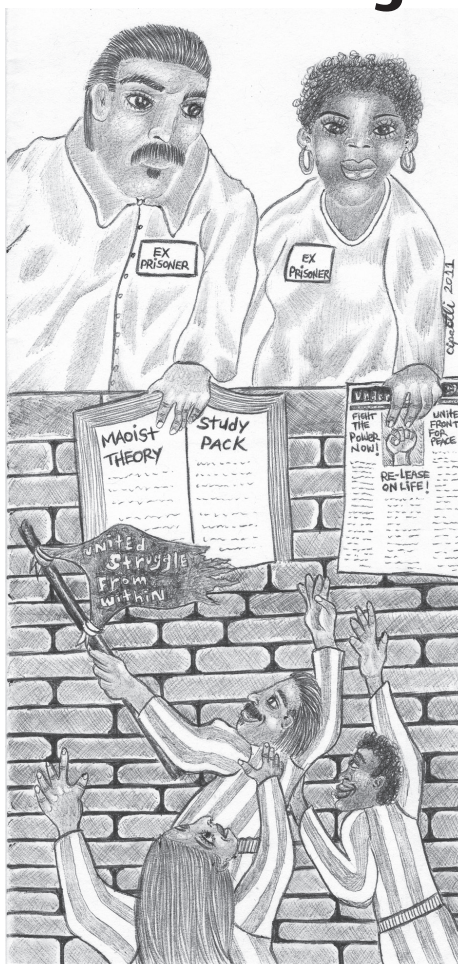
Meeting Your Basic Needs

There are few resources for released prisoners, and without family or friends to provide support it's very difficult to find housing, get a job and provide for basic necessities. There are few studies of homelessness among released prisoners, but those that we've found suggest that at least 10% of parolees end up on the streets without housing after release.(1) The numbers are probably higher; sleeping on a friend's couch is not a long term solution but it won't get you counted as homeless in these studies.

Unfortunately MIM(Prisons) doesn't currently have the resources to provide much help in the area of basic needs for released prisoners. We do have some resource guides for some states, and we can help you think through the best plan for your circumstances. But our ability to help in this area is limited. The rest of this article focuses on people who are released and are able to meet their basic needs. If you have a release date coming up, let us know so we can help you make a plan for the streets.

Time Management on the Streets

Behind bars life is very regimented, with little room for any decisions about how to organize your day, except when you are locked in your cell. And even there, your options for how to spend your time are very limited. You don't have to keep a schedule because the prison keeps it for you. So one of the problems prison-



ers face when they hit the street is the vastness of opportunities and choices, and the lack of structure.

Many comrades will want to pursue some education, while also finding a job, and attempting to reconnect with family and friends. This means a lot of choices and opportunities, and structured days are necessary to make them fit together. The demands of family and friends can be especially difficult during the initial months post-release after so long with social interactions closely monitored and limited.

Friends, family, school and work are all institutions that are deeply ingrained in and

Continued on page 4...

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United Playaz Building Peace on the Streets

by MIM(Prisons)
January 2012

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In this issue on release, we are featuring United Playaz in San Francisco, California, to give our comrades inside an idea of what some formerly-imprisoned people are doing to contribute to the struggle for peace since they've been out. Many staff members and volunteers with United Playaz (UP) have spent time in the prison system. MIM(Prisons) got the opportunity to interview one such staff-person, Rico, who spent 25 years in the California prison system. Rico is a former-gangbanger-turned-peace-advocate; a lifestyle change that many readers of *Under Lock & Key* can relate to.

United Playaz provides services to youth, including after-school programs and tours inside prisons, in an attempt to pull them out of the school-to-prison pipeline and (the potential for) violent activity, helping them refocus on their education. UP's mission statement reads,

United Playaz is a violence prevention and youth leadership organization that works with San Francisco's hardest to reach youth through case management, street outreach, in-school services, recreational activities at community centers, and support to incarcerated youth. United Playaz is committed to improving the lives of young people surviving in vulnerable environments, [who] show high incidence of truancy and low academic performance, or have been involved in the juvenile justice system through direct service and community collaboration. United Playaz believes that "it takes the hood to save the hood".

Rico explains how he first got involved with United Playaz,

In 1994 I was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. And at the time Rudy [UP's Executive Director] was bringing a bunch of troubled youth and youth that are involved in the juvenile system and kind of just showed them a glimpse of what's the result of making a bad decision. And that's where I met Rudy. And Rudy saw me work with the kids, and then he found out that I lived in the neighborhood that he was serving the youth and he asked me, "When you get released I want you to check out our program and see if you want to work with United Playaz." So like in 2005 I finally got out after 25 years of incarceration

Continued on page 5...

What is Under Lock & Key?

Under Lock & Key (ULK) is the voice of the anti-imperialist movement within prisons in the United States. Fighting the injustice system is just one part of the anti-imperialist struggle, and it is important that comrades not lose sight of the connections to the larger battle. For this reason, in addition to news about prisons and prisoner struggles, we also publish more general news and analysis important to the anti-imperialist movement. We welcome support and collaboration from those who are focused only on prison issues, but we also challenge them to see the importance of carrying out their work as part of a larger anti-imperialist strategy.

ULK serves as a forum to develop and promote agitational campaigns led by MIM(Prisons) and USW. Our current battles in the United States are legally permitted. We encourage prisoners to join these battles while explicitly discouraging them from engaging in any violence or illegal acts. MIM(Prisons) and its publications explicitly oppose the use of armed struggle at this time in the imperialist countries (including the United States).

ULK is edited and published by MIM(Prisons) and mostly written and illustrated by USW and other United Front organizations behind bars. *ULK* comes out every other month, and is free for U.S. prisoners. For people outside of prison, all issues of *ULK*, plus additional reports from within U.S. prisons, are available on MIM(Prisons)'s website: www.prisoncensorship.info

What is Imperialism?

Imperialism is an economic system that V.I. Lenin defined as "the highest stage of capitalism." It became well pronounced in the early 1900s and is defined by the globalization of capital, the dominance of finance capital and the division of the world into imperialist and exploited nations; Maoists see the latter as the principal contradiction in the world today.

As the economic system that dominates the world, imperialism determines much of the material reality that all inhabitants of planet Earth face today, including war, poverty and environmental destruction. This means that the status quo promoted by imperialist interests is the biggest hindrance to change. As the dominant imperialist power, both financially and militarily, the United States generally serves as the primary target of our attacks as anti-imperialists.

What is the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons?

The Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons, MIM(Prisons), is a cell of revolutionaries serving the oppressed masses inside U.S. prisons. We uphold the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and work from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat.

Imperialism is the number one enemy of the majority of the world's people; we cannot achieve our goal of ending all oppression without overthrowing imperialism. History has shown that the imperialists will wage war before they will allow an end to oppression.

As revolutionary internationalists, we support the self-determination of all nations and peoples. Today, the U.S. prison system is a major part of the imperialist state used to prevent the self-determination of oppressed nations. It is for this reason that we see prisoners in this country as being at the forefront of any anti-imperialist and revolutionary movement. While our organization focuses on prisoner support, we believe that there is a dire need for Maoists to do organizing and educational work in many areas in the United States. We hope people are inspired by our example around prisons and apply it to their own work to create more Maoist cells and broaden the Maoist

movement behind enemy lines.

MIM(Prisons) distinguishes ourselves from other groups on the six points below. We consider other organizations actively upholding these points to be fraternal.

1. Communism is our goal. Communism is a society where no group has power over any other group.

2. Dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary. In a dictatorship of the proletariat the formerly exploited majority dictates to the minority (who promoted exploitation) how society is to be run. In the case of imperialist nations, a Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Oppressed Nations (JDPON) must play this role where there is no internal proletariat or significant mass base that favors communism.

3. We promote a united front with all who oppose imperialism. The road to the JDPON over the imperialist nations involves uniting all who can be united against imperialism. We cannot fight imperialism and fight others who are engaged in life-and-death conflicts with imperialism at the same time. Even imperialist nation classes can be allies in the united front under certain conditions.

4. A parasitic class dominates the First World countries. As Marx, Engels and Lenin formulated and MIM Thought has reiterated through materialist analysis, imperialism extracts super-profits from the Third World and in part uses this wealth to buy off whole populations of so-called workers. These so-called workers bought off by imperialism form a new petty-bourgeoisie called the labor aristocracy; they are not a vehicle for Maoism. Those who work in the economic interests of the First World labor aristocracy form the mass base for imperialism's tightening death-grip on the Third World.

5. New bourgeoisies will form under socialism. Mao led the charge to expose the bourgeoisie that developed within the communist party in the Soviet Union and the campaign to bombard the headquarters in his own country of China. Those experiences demonstrated the necessity of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The class struggle does not end until the state has been abolished and communism is reached.

6. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China was the furthest advancement toward communism in history. We uphold the Soviet Union until the death of Stalin in 1953, followed by the People's Republic of China through 1976, as the best examples of modern socialism in practice. The arrest of the "Gang of Four" in China and the rise of Khrushchev in the Soviet Union marked the restoration of capitalism in those countries. Other experiments in developing socialism in the 20th century failed to surpass the Soviet model (i.e. Albania), or worse, stayed within the capitalist mode of production, generally due to a failure to break with the Theory of Productive Forces.

What is United Struggle from Within?

United Struggle from Within (USW) is a MIM(Prisons)-led mass organization for U.S. prisoners. USW is explicitly anti-imperialist in leading campaigns on behalf of U.S. 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. See page 12 for info on some of the active USW campaigns.

United Front for Peace in Prisons-Statement of Principles

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.S. 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?

★ Study and uphold the five principles above.

★ 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. 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) if you need additional materials to educate your members in history, politics and economics.

Editor's Note:

January 2012

While we did not have space to print additional statements of unity in this issue of ULK, we are always recruiting organizations to join the UF for Peace in Prisons (see opposite page). Some recent statements that have not yet appeared in ULK have come from the Black Mass Army in Virginia, the Revolutionary Mandingo Warriors in Texas, another USW study cell in California and the United Gangsta Nation. ★

Correction on SNY Debate

by a California prisoner
December 2011

I've never heard of MIM(Prisons) but enjoyed reading your newsletter and could relate to most of it. I will pass it on to others (already have!) and get more to add to your mailing list.

Please, if it's possible, beg off a little on the SNY stuff! It really turns a lot of our stomachs, to be sure. When I came into the system in the 80s there was no such thing as SNY. Everyone held their mud, even those who got hit (because if they talked, they knew they wouldn't live through the next one.) If you "locked up" you went to the hole, period! No yard, no packages, no programming of any kind, nothing! Now, they make it too easy for guys to be weak and run off to the child molesters, rapists yard!

If you really feel you absolutely must print their filth, please get all the facts correct. Such as *ULK* 23, p. 13, *Hunger Strike First Step in Building a United Front*, second paragraph "and Pleasant Valley State Prison is SNY." I know more than a few guys who're going to be none too pleased about this news, as they are still there.

FYI, Pleasant Valley A yard is Level IV SNY, B yard is Level III GP, C yard is Level III GP, D yard is Level III SNY, and Level I is GP! Call CDCR and verify these facts if you will. It's your newsletter, but I would seriously consider (re-consider) who and what you print.

MIM(Prisons) responds: First we want to commend this comrade for recognizing that a few disagreements should not stop us from working together and spreading the revolutionary United Front. In that spirit we want to struggle for greater unity here.

The writer is responding to an ongoing debate in *Under Lock & Key* about prisoners who escape the mainline for Special Needs Yards (SNY) where they are pushed to "debrief" or snitch on fellow prisoners in return for better treatment (in particular in the context of California prisons, but there are parallel situations everywhere). Many prisoners have already testified that not all SNY prisoners must debrief, a fact that this comrade is not disputing. So the gist of his argument is that it's "too easy" for

Continued on page 16

Criticism and Good Communication Helps Us Grow and Develop

by Ras Uhuru
January 2012

[The following is in response to a United Front (UF) statement from a group calling itself "Revolutionary Gangstas." Unfortunately, due to almost extremely widespread in South Carolina, we have not been able to get a response from them. On our website we continue to print solidarity statements with the UF, one of which is from the United Gangsta Nation, who was also sent some of these criticisms, but has not responded. We are printing this belatedly to voice the concerns brought up, and further all of our efforts at building a United Front. As with most letters we receive, the author's words below have been edited for brevity and clarity.]

Confusion most often is the agent provocateur's most precious tool to plow furrows in the soil of a lumpen formation, so to plant the bacillus seeds of annihilation.

This process is done by three means: (1) Those agent provocateurs who willingly work with the oppressors. (2) Those unconscious agent provocateurs whose behavior is so reckless and contrary to their formation or movement that they kick up enough dust and problems for the oppressor to use their actions to either plant and kill or as justification for more oppression and suppression. (3) The third type, while not agent provocateurs, can cause just as much damage. This third is "uneducated members" of a movement or formation who misrepresent that movement by stating or doing things inconsistent with the official position.

The brothers in *ULK* 21 from South Carolina state they are founding members of a formation they call "Revolutionary Gangstas." However, on the 21st line they also say they are "members of the Gangster Disciples," which is GD's former nomenclature.

I have a serious aversion with the misinformation, confusion and incorrectness that's being presented. First, if these brothers are "learned men" in that former nomenclature, they would not step into this LO revolutionary vita theater using defunct nomenclature that's inconsistent and contrary to the leader of that defunct LO's official position.

Secondly, they would know that LO is now officially and publicly moving within, and a vanguard in, the same principles of the United Front for Peace in the Vision of the Growth and Development Movement. Therefore, no "new" interior formation is required to be part of the UF for Peace. If these brothers wish to be part of the peace front, do so as believers of the Vision of Growth and Development, not as Revolutionary Gangstas.

As a secondary note, almost anyone can and has come to be "gangsta;" however being "gangster" as in Gangster Disciple (when it was in operation) was a privilege and entitlement that one had to learn and earn. It was not no fad or cartooning. Too many died for it to be cheap-

ly commercialized into the hip hop distorted concept of gangsta. Cease and desist.

If someone was educated in the Vision of Growth and Development, they would know that that whole gangster concept was put into the box of self-defense and selective reactionary response because our visionary teacher and his trusted companions recognized prudently how inferior that gangster could be in respect to our vision for real and true Revolutionary Growth and Development.

As men and intelligent thinkers and doers, we know that being gangster has its limitations that go against our vision. Therefore being gangster became a contradiction in practice and principle and needed to be put in its proper context, i.e. self-defense and selective reactionary revolutionary response only.

Our uniqueness is sublimated because we have been there, done that, and perfected that. Anyone who still holds such attachments are still asleep. Our visionary teacher has made it clear and has supplied us with the blueprint and tools to become that reclaiming power and force we need to be to matriculate within the formations of the struggles of USW and UF for Peace.

Way before the UF for Peace came into play, our vision has been instructing us through the Universal Laws of Existence that the "Love" of "Life" and the correct "loyalty" to it by applied "dedication", "determination" and "discipline" will produce in us a "knowledge", "wisdom," and "understanding" that will bring an inner peace and will be able to have unity and from there some "growth" and independence. And by implication, internationalism comes naturally because our vision is universal.

So if these brothers are serious, then do so by being properly educated and live, act and be all you can be as one within the vision.

I leave, as I come. One in the Vision of Growth and Development and a vanguard in the USW and UF for Peace. A student's teacher.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We are printing this discussion to work on two of the principles of the United Front for Peace. The first is *unity*, which requires communication and true facts. In addition, the principle of *growth* requires that we all strive to educate ourselves and each other. While we are still in the beginning stages of building united front, we are not the first to walk this path. Those with experience to share should submit their analysis of that experience to *ULK* so that others can learn from it.

From day one MIM(Prisons) has been aware of the many problems we would face printing statements from individuals or small groups that claimed affiliation to larger organizations. We are wary of the problem of prisoners using *ULK*'s prestige to launch new pet projects with no real leadership, while recognizing that we are in a stage where small, isolated groups of

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...Growth

anti-imperialists are stepping out to join forces and dialogue with each other. At our last congress we made a self-criticism for promoting anarchism around ideas of the cell structure and united front. We corrected this deviation with the resolution "Building New Groups vs. Working with USW and MIM(Prisons)." This resolution should also be considered in relation to lumpen organizations (LOs) by their members. The lumpen class has contradictions within it, and we should not dismiss the successes that LOs independent of the state have had in overcoming these contradictions and uniting large numbers of people over extended periods of time.

In the statement from the Revolutionary Gangstas in *ULK 21* they make a criticism that could be extrapolated to a whole, large organization. While "Revolutionary Gangstas" is providing an alternative, it is not one with a practice MIM(Prisons) can vouch for. To the extent that printing their statement suggested that they were a better alternative to Growth and Development, MIM(Prisons) was misleading the masses.

We addressed a similar issue in *ULK 17* when a former Latin King wrote us to criticize those affiliated with the group in his area. There we wrote, "For the lumpen to be internally critical is a necessary step for the development of a proletarian consciousness among the oppressed inside U.S. borders. However, to print public criticisms without providing real alternatives and leadership does more harm than good."

As our comrade expands on in subsequent writings, we do need better leadership and we do need to develop our analysis. But we should not criticize existing leadership until we have a viable alternative and existing leadership has rejected it. Our class analysis tells us that the oppressed nation lumpen organizations are our friends, and we should approach them from the standpoint of unity-criticism-unity.

As we recognize Growth and Development for their leadership and experience in this arena, we would not use the word "vanguard" to refer to them as Ras Uhuru does, as we reserve this term for those organizations that uphold the most correct proletarian line. Part of developing correct political leadership means taking up true internationalism. Ras Uhuru refers to internationalism being inherent in a vision that is universal. But organizations of various class interests too easily claim "internationalism" via identity politics or just vague phrases as in the example above. As stated in the 5 principles of the United Front for Peace in Prisons, internationalism means that "We cannot liberate ourselves when participating in the oppression of other nations." As citizens and residents of the most powerful country in the world we have a long way to go to prove our own internationalism.

In the spirit of unity-criticism-unity we appreciate the feedback we continue to get from our allies in various LOs who are working to make the United Front a reality. ★

...Continued from page 1

...Challenges

supported by our culture. There is no support for doing revolutionary organizing. That is why Re-Lease on Life is so important. People have a hard enough time doing the normal things they need to do to get by as former prisoners, especially as felons. If you just go with the flow, you'll find your time just flies by and you don't put in any political work.

To participate in the Re-Lease on Life program you need to make a commitment to political work upon release. But most people will need to keep this commitment minimal at first, so that you can focus on getting established with a plan for meeting your long-term needs as an individual, while keeping a connection to the movement.

It's important to think about the future. If you get government assistance, or have a part-time hustle when you get out, how long can that last you? If you don't have job skills or a college degree you should consider school and look into scholarships. On the other hand, it may be worthwhile to focus initially on just making some money before you consider starting school.

Think about where you want to be in a year or two. If your political work is limited by time now, how can you free up more time in the future? One way is by getting into a career path where your income will grow with your experience. Another consideration when looking for jobs is, how can it support my bigger goals? If you work in food service, you save money by bringing home leftovers. If you work at a copy shop, you get discounts on fliers and literature. Getting a manual labor job might help you meet your physical fitness goals. If you work at a security job you get paid to do your political study, leaving your free time to do outreach work.

Whatever your plan is, you need to start thinking about your time as a budget. You have only so much each week, each day. Determine how much you really need for the necessities in

life and then schedule that time.

A week has 168 hours in it. If you sleep 8 hours a night that leaves 112. If you need 2 hours a day to cook, eat and take care of personal hygiene, you are down to 98 hours. Take at least 5 hours a week to deal with other personal stuff like finances, cleaning, and organizing. You want to work out at least 4 hours per week, maybe more like 8. Now we have 85 left. If you work full time you've got 45, plus transit time, so make that 40. If you're going to school too, you could probably use up most of that 40. If you have regular appointments with your parole officer, doctor or counselor, that will take a few hours. In your best case scenario you might have 40 hours to spend on socializing, relaxing and doing political work. Realistically, finding 15 to 20 hours a week to do political work with a normal bourgeois life is an ambitious goal that requires discipline and good planning.

Keep in mind that even if you only have 5 hours a week free for political work, that is 5 hours of work getting done in the interests of the oppressed. Any time you can set aside for this work is good. And when you first hit the streets this will be easiest if you can set aside that time on your schedule so that it is always the same day/time. For instance, you could say that Tuesday and Thursday nights you will do political work from 5-8 p.m. Block it off on your calendar and tell your friends you have appointments or classes at those times (see below). Working this into your schedule as a regular thing will make it much easier to maintain your activism. If you give up and stop doing political work, chances are good that you will never take it up again. The revolution can't afford to lose good activists like you, so don't let that happen!

Money is Time

Just as challenging for many former prisoners as managing time is managing money, and the movement needs both. Don't fall into American consumerism. Imperialism has kept itself going by building a consumerist culture at home

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On Prisons & Prisoners

MIM(Prisons) seeks to build public opinion against Amerika's criminal injustice system, and to eventually replace the bourgeois injustice system with proletarian justice. The bourgeois injustice system imprisons and executes a disproportionately large and growing number of oppressed people while letting the biggest mass murderers -- the imperialists and their lackeys -- roam free. Imperialism is not opposed to murder or theft. It only insists that these crimes be committed in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

All U.S. citizens are criminals -- accomplices and accessories to the crimes of U.S. oppression globally until the day U.S. imperialism is overcome. All U.S. citizens should start from the point of view that they are reforming criminals.

MIM(Prisons) does not advocate that all prisoners go free today; we have a more effective program for fighting crime as was demonstrated in China prior to the restoration of capitalism there in 1976. We say that all prisoners are political prisoners because under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, all imprisonment is substantively political. It is our responsibility to exert revolutionary leadership and conduct political agitation and organization among prisoners -- whose material conditions make them an overwhelmingly revolutionary group. Some prisoners should and will work on self-criticism under a future dictatorship of the proletariat in those cases in which prisoners really did do something wrong by proletarian standards.

On "Objective" Reporting

Under Lock & Key relies on our comrades behind bars to report on conditions and events inside prisons. We track the history and reliability of our writers and, when possible, we double check facts in the articles. But there will always be some facts we cannot verify before printing. Our readers are encouraged to let us know if they have information that contradicts what they see in *Under Lock & Key*. Yet, recognize that no matter how much the bourgeoisie tries to pretend, reporting is never completely objective or devoid of political content. MIM(Prisons) will always report from the perspective of the international proletariat and on the issues that best serve their interests.

...Continued from previous page

...Challenges

to keep capital circulating. What that means is that a typical Amerikan lifestyle involves far more consumption than is necessary (or even healthy). Having your own apartment, your own car, a cell phone plan, and others preparing your food for you are just some obvious examples of things considered to be "necessary" expenses justifying the so-called "high cost of living" in this country. Seek out others who you can share expenses and cost-saving tips with. Extravagant spending is often a social behavior. Many recreational things like cable television, alcohol and cigarettes become habitual expenses. Rest and recreation are important, but try things that are more healthy and cost less, and if you do want to splurge, make it a special reward, not a daily expense.

One of our strengths in this country is that Amerikans get paid extremely high wages. By keeping expenses low, you'll find that you can get by on a part-time job, leaving you with more time to do what is most important to you. Remember, even if you're making minimum wage you are in the top 13% income bracket in the world. Don't use poverty as an excuse, when your wealth and privilege are really what's holding you back from doing political work.

The Persynal vs. The Political

Related to the challenges you will face with managing your time on the streets is the social demands of family and friends. The overlap between friendship and politics is something that most people don't consider. In fact, in this country we are encouraged to think about politics as something we must share with family and friends. But MIM(Prisons) does not agree with that view.

We live in a country where most people have a very strong material interest in the status quo, and so they will oppose anti-imperialist politics. The chances of winning them over to the side of the revolution are very minimal, and there is generally no need to destroy relationships with family and friends in the name of this struggle when there are so many other people out there we can try to recruit. Also, because of security

...Continued from page 1

and first I volunteered. And then once there was an opening, a job opening, Rudy hired me as a CRN, a community response network. It's a job that at night we go and do outreach, and drive around the city and just talk to the kids that are hanging out on the street.

MIM(Prisons) asked Rico about the importance of building a United Front for Peace in Prisons, and the challenges faced by such an endeavor.

Back in 1982 we formed a protest while I was in San Quentin. You know, prisoners used to have rights. We had the rights to see our family when they come see us. We had the right to get an education. We had a lot of rights. But slowly they took that away and now they have no rights. If you wanna get a

concerns in this country, exposing your politics to family and friends can put you at a real risk, especially if you are on parole. If there's one thing you should have learned being locked up, it's that snitches are everywhere.

There is nothing wrong with having friends who don't share your political convictions, you just need to avoid talking about politics with them or only talk about smaller points of politics, without raising suspicion. This doesn't mean you can't share your political views with friends and family who show that they are likely to be interested and agree, but be careful because once they know your views and the work you do, you can't take it back.

Basics About Security on the Streets

When you are locked up in prison the government has a lot of information about you and knows your every move. So behind bars you can only control your security to the extent that you keep your mouth shut on the yard and don't share information about the political work you are doing with people who might use it against you.

On the streets things are a little different. Although you might have to report in to a parole officer or allow the state to track you in some other way as a term of your release, you have a lot more freedom about what information you do and don't share with people and with the government. You are under no obligation to tell anyone about the political work you do, and in fact you should do your best to keep this private from people you know unless you have a reason to believe that they would be supportive. And of course you want to keep it a mystery from the state. This is NOT because we are doing anything illegal, but rather because the state does not like anti-imperialists and will use this as a reason to find or create an excuse to lock you back up. So don't make this easy for them. ★

Notes:

1. *Taking Stock: Housing, Homelessness and Prisoner Reentry*, by the Urban Institute, March 8, 2004. <http://www.urban.org/publications/411096.html>

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visit, you have to work. If you don't work, you don't get a visit.

So anyway the Asian, Latino, the African American, the Caucasian, we all got together and say, "You know what? Let's all sit down. Nobody goes to work, nobody go to school, nothing." And prison really depends on prisoners. Cuz you have jobs there, that requires like maybe \$35,000 a year job, they let the prisoner do that job and get paid like \$18 a month. So they're saving a lot of money using prisoners to run the prison system, right? So when we sit down, when we shut down, man, they gave us what we want and everything like back to normal and everything smooth.

There's always incident in the pen, like prisoners hurting each other, but that's a good example that when, how do you say - together we stand, divided we fall. So you know if we are united man a lot of violence in here will probably diminish tremendously, right? Cuz the people inside, they'll preach peace out here. And a lot of kids that are doing bad behavior out here, they're influenced by a lot of prisoners inside the pen. But right now there's no peace. There's no peace. ...

Well, there is [organizing for peace and unity inside prisons] but you have to do it on the under because one thing administration, prison administration don't want you to do is to organize and try to bring peace. In prison they want us to be divided. You know what I mean? So there's ways that we can organize but it has to be on the under.

It is ridiculous that prisoners have to discuss how to go about not killing each other in secret, so as to not upset the prison administrators' paychecks! But this is not the only anti-people development to come from the evolution of the criminal injustice system, which is designed solely to protect capitalism and its beloved profit motive. Rico explains some of the consequences of deciding who stays in and who gets out in a capitalist society,

The more you treat a prisoner like an animal, when they come out they act like animal out here. I mean one time I was in segregation unit, in the hole. This guy he was so violent that he can't be out in the mainline, right? Anyway it was time for him to go. So when they let him out, he was handcuffed out the building, across the yard, in a van, right? And they drop him off outside. When they drop him off they just uncuffed him, "You're free." How can we help someone like that, to be out here? If he's so violent inside that he needs to be segregated, how can they let someone out like that? So if he commit a crime out here, that's gonna look bad on a lot of prisoners. And they have more power to say, "See what happens when we release these guys out?"

But there's guys in there that are doing better than I do - that they can do better than what I do out here, and yet they still locked up in the pen, because of politics. There's a lot of em, a lot of em man. I know some of em personally that should have been out you know and giving back. And they can do a lot of contribution out here to bring peace. How can we get those guys out?

Our answer to Rico's question is that the
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Book Review: The New Jim Crow

by Soso of MIM(Prisons)
November 2011

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness
by Michelle Alexander
2010, The New Press, New York

This book is an excellent aggregation of facts about every aspect of the system - incarceration, policing, the drug war, the courts - making a scientific case that this is really a system for social control of oppressed nations within U.S. borders. Where Alexander falls short is in her analysis of how this fits into society in the broader context. She doesn't actually name national oppression, though certainly this book is clear evidence for the existence of something more than just an attitude of racism. She doesn't take on the question of why Amerikan capitalism would want such an extensive system of prison social control. As a result, her solutions are reformist at best.

Prisons as a Tool of National Oppression

Starting with the history of Amerikan prisons, Alexander explains how the relatively low and stable incarceration rate in this country changed after the civil rights movement which the government labeled criminal and used as an excuse to "get tough on crime" and increase incarceration.(p. 41) It was actually the revolutionary nationalist movements of the 60s and 70s, most notably the Black Panther Party, which terrified the Amerikan government and led to mass incarceration, murder, brutality and infiltration to try to destroy these revolutionary groups. Alexander's failure to mention these movements is symptomatic of a missing piece throughout the book - an understanding of the importance of revolutionary nationalism.

This book does an excellent job exposing the war on drugs as a farce that is only really concerned with social control. Although studies show that the majority of drug users are white, 3/4 of people locked up for drug crimes are Black or Latino.(p. 96) Further, statistics show that violent crime rates are unrelated to imprisonment rates.(p. 99) So when people say they are locking up "criminals" what they mean is they are locking up people who Amerikan society has decided are "criminals" just because of their nation of birth.

To her credit, Alexander does call out Nixon and his cronies for their appeal to the white working class in the name of racism, under the guise of law and order, because this group felt their privileges were threatened.(p. 45) And she recognizes this underlying current of white support for the criminal injustice system for a variety of reasons related to what we call national privilege. But this book doesn't spend much time on the historical relations between the privileged white nation and the oppressed nations. J. Sakai's book *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* does a much better job of that.

Alexander argues that Amerikans, for the

most part, oppose overt racial bias. But instead we have developed a culture of covert bias that substitutes words like "criminal" for "Black" and then discriminates freely. This bias is what fuels the unequal policing, sentencing rates, prison treatment, and life after release for Blacks and Latinos in Amerika. Studies have shown that Amerikans (both Black and white) when asked to identify or imagine a drug criminal overwhelmingly picture a Black person.(p. 104) So although this is statistically inaccurate (they should be picturing a white youth), this is the culture Amerika condones. Even this thin veil over outright racism is a relatively new development in Amerika's long history as a pio-

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only way to get all those guys out, for good, is to organize for socialism and then communism. Any reforms we make to the prison system as it is now may let some people out, but as long as capitalism exists people will be exploited and oppressed. This leads to resistance, both direct and indirect, and prison is for those who don't play by the rules. In socialism, everyone has a role to play in society and state oppression is only used against those who try to oppress others.

When the economic system changes to value people over profit, prisons will also change. In China under Mao, Allyn and Adele Rickett were two Amerikan spies in China who wrote a book titled "Prisoners of Liberation" about their experience as prisoners of the Communist Party of China. Their experience taught them that when prisoners have completed self-criticism and are ready to contribute to society, they will be released. On the other side, when prisoners are doing harm to society (such as organizing to reinstitute a capitalist economic system) they are not allowed to be released just because their term is up. Instead they are encouraged to study, read, discuss, and do self-criticism until they become productive members of society.

Anyone with a sympathetic bone in their body can tell what was going on in China under Mao is a much more useful mode of imprisonment than what we have at present. The difference between the liberal and MIM(Prisons) is we know the only way to get there is through socialist revolution so that the prison system is in the hands of those currently oppressed by it.

Another present day challenge we discussed with UP was its goal to be financially self-sufficient in the future. Rico explains the current limitations that come with getting state funding,

If it's up to us, we're gonna go hard, and really fight for peace. But because we're fund[ed] by DCYF [San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families], they limit our movement. We can't even participate, or like rally. If there's a Occupy rally right now, we can't go, cuz our organization are prevented from doing things like that. And I think that's important, that we're out there with the rest of the people that are trying to fight for change. Every year we do a Silence the Violence Peace March. That's okay, you know, Martin Luther King, marches like that,

neer in the ideology of racism. (see *Labor Aristocracy, Mass Base of Social Democracy* by H.W. Edwards)

"More African American adults are under correctional control today - in prison or jail, on probation or parole - than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began."(p. 175) It is this national oppression that leads Alexander to draw the parallel that is the source of the book's title: prisons are the new Jim Crow. She recognizes that prisons are not slavery, but that instead prisons are a legal way to systematically oppress whole groups of people. While

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we're okay to do that. But when it's like budgets, and crime, and about prison, you know, rally to try to bring those those things down, we can't really participate. ...

What's going on outside the youth can affect them in the future if things don't change. And why wait til those kids get old and take em to expose them to march and fight for your rights? You know I love to take these young adults to a movement like that, cuz that gives em knowledge of life, that there's more than just hanging out on the street. But unfortunately we're not allowed to participate in that kind of movement.

We have learned from history that these limitations aren't unique to UP's financial situation. For the non-profit in the United States, similar to "aid" given to Third World countries, capitalists always ensure their money is working in favor of their interests. This is why one of the points of unity of the United Front for Peace in Prisons is "Independence." Money is too easy to come by in this country, while good revolutionaries are too hard to find. Liberation has always been powered by people. So we agree with Rico on the importance for striving for autonomy.

Until then, positive steps can certainly be made within these limitations. There are many levels to our movement and many roles to play in building peace and unity among the lumpen. And without groups like UP reaching the youth on the streets, efforts like the United Front for Peace in Prisons will be too one-sided to succeed.

To close, Rico shares these words with comrades preparing for release,

The only thing I can say is that as long as you're alive there's hope. And if they really want to go home, then do the right thing, regardless. And they gotta stand up for their rights man. And they have to just try to get along with each other and think about peace, because they are needed out here. The experience they have in the pen, they can save a lot of lives out here, with their younger brothers and sisters that look for real guidance from someone who's been there and done that. Good luck, I hope they get out and be out here and help our system change to a better place.

As a "free citizen" you have much greater freedom to organize on the outside compared to in prison, even on probation or parole. Your activism shouldn't end with your prison term! ★

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she focuses on Blacks in this book she does note that the same conditions apply to Latinos in this country.

The Role of the Police

Alexander addresses each aspect of the criminal injustice system, demonstrating how it has developed into a tool to lock up Black and Brown people. Starting with the police system she notes that the courts have virtually eliminated Fourth Amendment protections against random police searches, which has led to scatter shot searches. By sheer volume these yield some arrests.(p. 67) These searches are done at the discretion of the police, who are free to discriminate in the neighborhoods they choose to terrorize. This discretion has led to systematic searches of people living in ghettos but no harassment of frat parties or suburban homes and schools where statistics show the cops would actually have an even better chance of finding drugs. In reality, when drug arrests increase it is not a sign of increased drug activity, just an increase in police activity.(p. 76)

Law enforcement agencies were encouraged to participate in the drug war with huge financial incentives from the federal government as well as equipment and training. This led to the militarization of the police in the 1990s.(p. 74) Federal funding is directly linked to the number of drug arrests that are made, and police were granted the right to keep cash and assets seized in the drug war.(p. 77) These two factors strongly rewarded police departments for their participation.

Asset seizure laws emphasize the lack of interest by the government and police in imprisoning drug dealers or kingpins, despite drug war propaganda claims to the contrary. Those with assets are allowed to buy their freedom while small time users with few assets to trade are subjected to lengthy prison terms. Alexander cites examples of payments of \$50k cutting an average of 6.3 years from a sentence in Massachusetts.(p. 78)

Bias in the Courts

Taking on the court system, Alexander points out that most people are not represented by adequate legal council, if they have a lawyer at all, since the war on drugs has focused on poor people. And as a result, most people end up pleading out rather than going to trial. The prosecution is granted broad authority to charge people with whatever crimes they like, and so they can make the list of charges appear to carry a long sentence suggesting that someone would do well to accept a "lesser" plea bargained deal, even if the likelihood of getting a conviction on some of the charges is very low.

Further discretion in dismissing jurors, selective policing, and sentencing all lead to systematically different treatment for Blacks and Latinos relative to whites.

Release from Prison but a Lifetime of Oppression

This book goes beyond the system of incarceration to look at the impact on prisoners who are released as well as on their families and communities. Alexander paints a picture that is fundamentally devastating to the Black community.

She outlines how housing discrimination against former felons prevents them from getting Section 8 housing when this is a group most likely to be in need of housing assistance. Public housing can reject applicants based on arrests even if there was no conviction. This lack of subsidized or publicly funded housing is compounded by the unavailability of jobs to people convicted of crimes, as a common question on job applications is used to reject these folks. "Nearly one-third of young black men in the United States today are out of work. The jobless rate for young black male dropouts, including those incarcerated, is a staggering 65 percent."(p. 149)

"Nationwide, nearly seven out of eight people living in high-poverty urban areas are members of a minority group."(p. 191) A standard condition of parole is a promise not to associate with felons, a virtual impossibility when released back into a community that is riddled with former felons.

"Today a criminal freed from prison has scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a freed slave or a black person living 'free' in Mississippi at the height of Jim Crow. Those released from prison on parole can be stopped and searched by the police for any reason - or no reason at all - and returned to prison for the most minor of infractions, such as failing to attend a meeting with a parole officer. Even when released from the system's formal control, the stigma of criminality lingers. Police supervision, monitoring, and harassment are facts of life not only for those labeled criminals, but for all those who 'look like' criminals. Lynch mobs may be long gone, but the threat of police violence is ever present...The 'whites only' signs may be gone, but new signs have gone up - notices placed in job applications, rental agreements, loan applications, forms for welfare benefits, school applications, and petitions for licenses, informing the general public that 'felons' are not wanted here. A criminal record today authorizes precisely the forms of discrimination we supposedly left behind - discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service. Those labeled criminals can even be denied the right to vote."(p. 138)

Alexander devotes a number of pages to the issue of voting and the prohibition in all but two states on prisoners voting while incarcerated for a felony offense, and the further denial of the vote to prisoners released on parole. Some states even take away prisoners' right to vote for life. She is right that this is a fundamental point of disenfranchisement, but Alexander suggests that "a large number of close elections would have come out differently if felons had been allowed to vote..."(p. 156) This may be true, but

those differences would not have had a significant impact on the politics in Amerika.

National Oppression

While confusing it with racism, a way of thinking, Alexander does do an excellent job describing the system of national oppression in the United States. She notes "One way of understanding our current system of mass incarceration is to think of it as a birdcage with a locked door. It is a set of structural arrangements that locks a racially distinct group into a subordinate political, social and economic position, effectively creating a second-class citizenship. Those trapped within the system are not merely disadvantaged, in the sense that they are competing on an unequal playing field or face additional hurdles to political or economic success; rather, the system itself is structured to lock them into a subordinate position."(p. 180)

The book explains that the arrest and lock up of a few whites is just part of the latest system of national oppression or "the New Jim Crow": "[T]he inclusion of some whites in the system of control is essential to preserving the image of a colorblind criminal justice system and maintaining our self-image as fair and unbiased people."(p. 199)

One interesting conclusion by Alexander is the potential for mass genocide inherent in the Amerikan prison system. There really is no need for the poor Black workers in factories in this country any longer so this population has truly become disposable and can be locked away en masse without any negative impact to the capitalists (in fact there are some positive impacts to these government subsidized industries).(p. 208) It's not a big leap from here to genocide.

Economics for Blacks have worsened even as they improved for whites. "As unemployment rates sank to historically low levels in the late 1990s for the general population, joblessness rates among non-college black men in their twenties rose to their highest levels ever, propelled by skyrocketing incarceration rates."(p. 216) She points out poverty and unemployment stats do not include people in prison. This could underestimate the true jobless rate by as much as 24% for less-educated black men.(p. 216)

Unfortunately, in her discussion of what she calls "structural racism" Alexander falls short. She recognizes white privilege and the reactionary attitudes of the white nation, acknowledging that "working class" whites support both current and past racism, but she does not investigate why this is so. Attempting to explain the systematic racism in Amerikan society Alexander ignores national oppression and ends up with a less-than-clear picture of the history and material basis of white nation privilege and oppressed nation oppression within U.S. borders. National oppression is the reason why these oppressive institutions of slavery, Jim Crow, and imprisonment keep coming back in different forms in the U.S., and national liberation is the only solution.

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How to Change the System

Alexander highlights the economic consequences of cutting prisons which show the strong financial investment that Amerikans have overall in this system: "If four out of five people were released from prison, far more than a million people could lose their jobs." (p. 218) This estimation doesn't even include the private sector: private prisons, manufacturers of police and guard weapons, etc.

To her credit, Alexander understands that small reformist attacks on the criminal justice system won't put an end to the systematic oppression: "A civil war had to be waged to end slavery; a mass movement was necessary to bring a formal end to Jim Crow. Those who imagine that far less is required to dismantle mass incarceration and build a new, egalitarian racial consensus reflecting a compassionate rather than punitive impulse towards poor people of color fail to appreciate the distance between Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream and the ongoing racial nightmare for those locked up and locked out of American society." (p. 223)

The problem with this analysis is that it fails to extrapolate what's really necessary to make change sufficient to create an egalitarian society. In fact, these very examples demonstrate the ability of the Amerikan imperialists to adapt and change their approach to national oppression: slavery, Jim Crow, mass incarceration. Alexander seems to see this when she talks about what will happen if the movement to end mass incarceration doesn't address race: "Inevitably a new system of racialized social control will emerge - one that we cannot foresee, just as the current system of mass incarceration was not predicted by anyone thirty years ago." (p. 245) But she stops short of offering any useful solutions to "address race" in this fight.

Alexander argues that affirmative action and the token advancement of a few Blacks has served as a racial bribe rather than progress, getting them to abandon more radical change. (p. 232) She concludes that the Black middle class is a product of affirmative action and would disappear without it. (p. 234) "Whereas black success stories undermined the logic of Jim Crow, they actually reinforce the system of mass incarceration. Mass incarceration depends for its legitimacy on the widespread belief that all those who appear trapped at the bottom actually chose their fate." (p. 235)

This is a good point: successful reformism often ends with a few token bribes in an attempt to stop a movement from making greater demands. And this is not really success. But short of revolution, there is no way to successfully end national oppression. And so Alexander's book concludes on a weak note as she tries to effect a bold and radical tone and suggest drastic steps are needed but offers no concrete suggestions about what these steps should be. She ends up criticizing everything from affirmative action to Obama but then pulling back and apologiz-

ing for these same institutions and individuals. This is the hole that reformists are stuck in once they see the mess that is the imperialist Amerikan system.

It's not impossible to imagine circumstances under which the Amerikan imperialists would want to integrate the oppressed nations within U.S. borders into white nation privilege. This could be advantageous to keep the home country population entirely pacified and allow the imperialists to focus on plunder and terrorism in the Third World. But we would not consider this a success for the oppressed peoples of the world.

A progressive movement against national oppression within U.S. borders must fight alongside the oppressed nations of the world who face even worse conditions at the hands of Amerikan imperialism. These Third World peoples may not face mass incarceration, but they suffer from short lifespans due to hunger and preventable diseases as well as the ever-present threat of death at the hands of Amerikan militarism making the world safe for capitalist plunder. ★

State Can't Meet Our Needs

by an Illinois prisoner
September 2011

I have been a prisoner of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) for more than 11 years and am scheduled to be released within the next 2 years. But with no family left in this world, no place to go, no clothes other than the ones on my back, and no support system established... the odds are stacked up against me way before I am even released back into society and the only thing that the IDOC is going to provide me with before releasing me back into the so-called "free world" is a \$10 check.

I am really interested in the July/August 2011 issue of *Under Lock & Key* because there's an article in there about a prison strike [in California]. A lot of people around the world aren't aware that the prisoners at the Stateville Maximum Correctional Center in Joliet, Illinois had a similar prison uprising in February and March of 2011. It was swept under the rug by then Director Gladys C. Taylor and Governor Patrick J. Quinn. This movement wasn't just a particular gang or a particular race orchestration, we all came together as one mass body (Blacks, Latinos, and whites) to protest the condition that we've been subjected to ever since the Richard Specs video leakage in 1995. In fact, I'm enclosing a copy of my adjustment committee's final summary for your entertainment.

MIM(Prisons) adds: This prisoner gives two examples of how the state will not serve the needs of the oppressed. When prisoners try to work together and quash beefs to do something positive they are targeted for repression. Then, after over a decade in prison, people are sent to the streets with no resources or support. This is why it is only by building institutions independent of the imperialist state that we can begin to address these complaints. ★

Validation Leads to Longer Sentences for Oppressed Nations

by a California prisoner
November 2011

They like to label us the "worst of the worst" and "California's most dangerous" but in fact most of us are doing time for drugs or property crimes, and through CDCR's blatant disrespect for the constitution and their failure to supply adequate appeals process, we are now forced to do all of our prison sentence. I'm fully aware that in San Quentin alone most validated SHU prisoners are first timers, have never been past the reception phase of intake, and are either here for drug related cases, vehicle theft, or burglary. These are not hardened convicts. These are young males age 19-25 of all races, but the majority are Latino and Black.

Along with the mistakes that have brought them to this place, many here have made the mistake of freedom of expression by tattooing themselves with cultural pride. Those tattoos combined with their nationality get these prisoners validated as gang members when they first walk through the prison doors. Validated prisoners are not entitled to any good time credits, which means they serve longer prison terms than those not validated (more often white prisoners). So those of us validated straight from the reception center, in here for non-violent crimes (drugs or property theft), are not entitled to any good time credits. I was sentenced to 8 years, I must do all 8 years, but a convicted sex offender who is sentenced to the same amount of time is out in less than 6 years.

Due to an administration policy, most if not all of us who have been validated have never received a rule violation report for the alleged gang participation for which we are validated. What happens when the people who are in a position to assist in fixing the system only loosen the nuts more, so the pipes will break, because their family are plumbers!

This new realignment (in the name of reducing the prison populations) is hilarious. Now prisoners will stay in county jail, which means CDCR will have more room to house SHU prisoners, currently in San Quentin, Carson section. Right now we're forced to stay in reception centers for up to 2.5 years before being transferred to a SHU.

I can 100% agree with the demands of Pelican Bay, and I really wish that those in San Quentin would look to them as an example to follow. The prisoners here in San Quentin participated in the hunger strike for one meal on the very first day of the strike in July.

All validated prisoners are part of the same struggle. Stop opposing each other because of

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Lost in Translation: Obama on Migrant "Problem"

by USW C-4 of United Struggle from Within
November 2011

[This article is also in Spanish on page 14.]

Si se puede o no se puede? (Yes, we can or no, we can't?) Which one is it Mr. President?

Beginning in 2008 we started hearing from then presidential candidate Barack Obama that if elected he'd take quick action on immigration reform. During this time he also began straying to the left of the bourgeois mainstream opinion by hinting at a distaste for workplace raids of undocumented migrants. Also, he never bothered to mention anything about the many undocumented people who'd committed a "crime" in crossing the Mexico/U.S. border when he gave his speech at the National Council of La Raza.(1)

Indeed, statements and positions such as these on the issue of immigration reform helped popularize the Illinois Senator amongst Latinos, which in turn helped him to wrestle the Latino vote away from then NY senator Hillary Clinton.(2) Yet here we are now three years out from the election of the first Black President of the United States of Amerika and time has once again shown us that Barack Obomber, like all other Amerikan politicians, has nothing more to offer the oppressed nations but broken promises and more oppression.

One million people have been deported from the U.S. since the taking of office by Obomber in 2009. That's 400,000 deportations a year with the various Latino nations bearing the brunt of it.(3) It's also important to note that this number of deportations is actually up from the previous Bu\$h administration, and ridiculously higher than the 500,000 people who were literally "railroaded" to Mexico between 1929-39 in what the imperialists called "repatriation drivers." This despite the fact that not everyone who was deported were Mexican nationals.(4)

More recently the U.S. initiated the mass deportations under the guise of the Obomber administration's federally funded program called "Secure Communities" in which Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials, in conjunction with local law enforcement, searched out the undocumented and carried out raids against them all across the country.(3) The raids are conducted under the heading of "fugitive operations." (3)

At first local law enforcement was given the option of joining Secure Communities but many were hesitant foreseeing the potential problems this might pose to their daily functions as occupiers of the internal semi-colonies as well as to the policing of neighborhoods with a high density populace of newly arrived migrants. (3) ICE however was eventually able to sell Secure Communities to the pigs after telling them they'd only be going after the "worst of the worst." (3)

According to government mouthpieces, half the people who've been deported since 2009 were violent offenders, but investigations into the program have revealed that many of the people deported have actually been deported due to minor infractions such as Susana Ramirez who was arrested by local law enforcement for a minor traffic stop, sent to a federal detention center and was subsequently deported to Mexico from Maple Park, Illinois. All this happened in the span of a few days despite the fact that she had no criminal background and was raising U.S. citizen children.(3)

But was Susana Ramirez actually one of the lucky ones considering the circumstances? The answer is yes.

Tent cities, cramped quarters, no right to attorneys, racism, verbal abuse, mental abuse, beatings and sexual assault: this is the stark reality that awaits the undocumented as they are imprisoned and deported at the hands of Amerikans.(3)

Case in point is the Willacy, Texas Federal Immigration Detention Center where a recent investigation by the ACLU determined that there was "widespread sexual abuse of female detainees and a systematically positioned injustice system with no accountability firmly intact." (3) This information was further corroborated by former Willacy guards and a former Willacy psychiatrist who gave eyewitness accounts of the abuse, contrary to a 2009 ICE audit of the prison camp in which the detention center was given a rating of "good." (3)

During the same period ICE also conducted a survey of the prisoners supposedly to encourage grievance filing. Unfortunately, the survey was nothing but a ruse orchestrated and conducted by ICE officials themselves in an effort to pinpoint those attempting to file complaints and dissuade them from following through.(3)

What's to Come?

So what is in store for the migrant population of the U.S.? Well, if current reality and the number of people currently locked up in Amerika's prisons can serve as indicators of what's to come then we should expect the country with the highest percentage of its population behind bars to now become the country with the highest percentage of foreign nationals behind bars as well. This is more proof of how the U.S. oppresses the world's majority. They are political prisoners indeed.

Liberal critics of the Secure Communities program such as the ACLU have pointed out that it is nothing more than the Bush administration's immigration policies juiced up on Obomber steroids.(5) And while we'd have to agree we'd also have to go further. Secure Communities is the utilization of the Amerikan injustice system as a proxy resolution for its superfluous migrant population which the U.S. directly displaced to

begin with! Descendents of the original inhabitants of this land migrate to the United States to work at jobs that Amerikans won't do, making less than Amerikans make in wages. But there are only so many of these undesirable jobs that need to be filled, and open borders would result in an equalization of Amerikan wages with the rest of the world -- the biggest fear of the labor aristocracy. This economic reality, combined with political threats that an expanding oppressed population inside U.S. borders poses, explains why Amerika targets migrants (particularly those coming across the Rio Grande) for strict control.

At an El Paso speech earlier this year President Obomber was once again telling lies and talking out of both sides of his mouth when he stated that there would be no comprehensive immigration reform because of Republican stubbornness.(3) Bottom line, there will be no comprehensive reform and there will continue to be "enforcement on steroids." And no reform means the requirement under Secure Communities to deport 400,000 people a year, according to an ICE internal memo, will continue to be enforced to maintain funding from Congress.(3)

When asked about the toll these numbers would take on migrant families in the U.S., Cecilia Muñoz, an Obomber administration top official with Interior Affairs, answered in typical oppressor nation rhetoric, that "broken families are the result of broken laws." She then went on to state how it was all just part of the immigration problem.(3)

To that coconut we say quite the contrary. There is no immigration problem, but there is an imperialism problem. As a matter of fact it's the number one problem in the world today: principally U.S. imperialism.

In the wake of Susana Ramirez's deportation there was a push to have a Senate Bill voted on and passed to deny ICE any more funding for Secure Communities. The bill was called "Susana's Law," and it was defeated.(3) ★

Notes:

1. Professor Alexa Saragoza, *Chicano 50*, Vol. 1, p20
2. *Ibid.* p24
3. *Frontline: Lost in Detention*, PBS 10/18/2011.
4. Author Unknown, *History of the Chicano People*, p48.
5. Joanne Lin for ACLU. 18 August 2011 "Agreed: Facts Matter on Immigrant Detention and Deportation."

... Continued from previous page ... Validation

separate beliefs, and start to truly unite as humans in the same fight for true justice!

MIM(Prisons) adds: This is a great addition to our review of *The New Jim Crow* (page 6), which discusses how the criminal injustice system targets oppressed nations for social control. However, we do not have statistics to support the author's scapegoating of sex offenders. We have seen sex offenders do their full time and then be sent to a "hospital" where they will spend the rest of their lives locked up without being charged with a new crime! ★

Imperialist Warmongers Target Iran

by a New Mexico prisoner
December 2011

While Israel/Netanyahu proclaim that Iran has, or is developing, a nuclear arsenal and that nuclear research by Iran can be dangerous for peace in the Middle East, Israel continues to stockpile nuclear weapons freely, without any restriction or limit from the international community; the same as the USA! So why is Israel allowed to develop all kinds of nuclear arsenal and weapons of mass destruction, as is the United States, but Iran is not allowed to have any kind of nuclear research, not even for peaceful purposes, such as energy? Is Israel less aggressive and less war-waging than Iran? Is the USA less war waging than Iran? Are the USA and Israel more democratic and just than Iran or Syria or Iraq or Afghanistan?

It looks like democracy, to the USA, is in the eye of the beholder! To the imperialists, democracy means providing for the elite, the top aristocracy and their lackeys, but not for the oppressed and exploited of the world. This is part of the principal contradiction in imperialist society. It is selfish and cannot see democracy from the vantage of the oppressed nations and the Third World nations!

So Israel can have nuclear warheads, pointing toward Iran, Syria, or any Arab-Muslim country that they claim threatens Israel, but none of those countries can have nuclear research, even if it is for peaceful purposes like generating electricity. With this kind of provocation, Israel is ushering the Arab-Muslim countries to war; but that might be unfortunate for Israel!

MIM(Prisons) responds: This is a good point about imperialist double standards that we need to hammer home each time we see examples of it. The imperialists define who they want to label "terrorists" while they run around the world committing real acts of terror: mass murder, widespread destruction, and environmental devastation. It is the imperialists who will be the cause of the end of humyn life on earth if we do not come together with the oppressed of the world to put an end to imperialist terror.

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Stars on the map indicate U.S. military bases, demonstrating who is the aggressor against who.

For the Struggle

by a Federal prisoner
October 2011

Revolution is a must
Without it, we will surely die
It's time for the oppressed to rise
Locked down there's no trust
Next man will get ya head bust
Maoist movement will get us liberty
We can't achieve liberty
If we don't have unity
I'll fight til the death of me
Til the last breath that's left in me
Forever screaming "Revolution!"
This is the new world solution
Fuck Uncle Sam and his pollution
Stand with your brothers in struggle
Stand on top of the rubble
Remember Maoist movements
For the struggle ★

REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE

We've been printing a full page of poems/rhymes and art for the past several issues of Under Lock & Key. At the same time, we struggle to fit all the articles we want to include in each issue, and always have to leave stuff out.

So we wonder, is a dedicated Revolutionary Culture page an efficient use of space? As a reader of Under Lock & Key, what do you get out of this page? We know that the rhymes inspire others to send us poetry, but do the rhymes help you recruit people into the struggle, or help you stay focused? Tell us about it!

Push for A Unified Vision

by MIM(Prisons)
December 2011

We have been getting letters from prisoners across the country who were inspired by the food strike in California prisons and want to use this tactic to bring attention and change to conditions in their own state's prisons. Even within California, we saw comrades outside of the SHU organize their own hunger strike in Corcoran Ad-Seg:

I've been filing grievances upon grievances challenging our conditions, but they just say, "we're working on it."

The rest of the comrades and I are in protest. We have begun a hunger strike. December 28, 2011 was the beginning of this peaceful protest, and we will continue this struggle till our needs are met.

We just hit the two year anniversary of the beginning of a United Struggle from Within campaign in California (which continues to spread to other states) demanding that prisoner grievances be addressed. It continues to be a popular campaign, though many recognize its inherent limits in a system that is not interested in our grievances. Z-Unit in High Desert State Prison did utilize the campaign to achieve some improvements in their conditions. But it is little surprise comrades have stepped it up a notch beyond the petitions we were circulating.

"We're working on it" is the refrain the comrades in Pelican Bay have been getting in response to previous hunger strikes launched in the past year, while nothing has changed in the SHU. We should be drawing lessons from that.

Since last issue, we got word from Texas that:

Yesterday afternoon (November 14, 2011) in 4 building recreational yard, 20+ prisoners (Brown, Black and white) gathered in

Continued on next page..

Musings of a Hunger Striker

by a California prisoner
October 2011

Sitting here on my 17th day of a hunger strike, in protest of the inhumane and torturous treatment of our confinement in the Security Housing Units (SHU) of Pelican Bay State Prison, my heart races at 126 beats per minute -- at rest! Am I going to have a heart attack? Am I mad for risking my health -- my life! -- or am I just fed up with having spent 25 years in SHU for non-disciplinary reasons?

My mind is racing just as fast, if not faster, as my heart. A fog has settled in on my thoughts. Everything seems hazy and I'm not sure if I'm even thinking logically anymore. This morning I was dozing in and out of a dream. I usually don't remember my dreams anymore, so I'm not even sure if I was actually dreaming or if I was awake, just thinking in the fog. But this is what I remember:

I was in this big ol' boat, along with a whole lot of other guys, and we were rowing this boat. It was hard work (and maybe that's what got my heart pumping so hard!), and if any of us slowed down or fell out of sync, these overseers would come over and whip us something awful, so we all had an incentive to keep rowing.

Then an old man, a few rows in front of me, stopped rowing. He started to sway, from side to side, as the overseers whipped him. Regardless of the pain, the old man just continued to sway, from side to side, from side to side, and all he would say is "rock." Everyone thought the guy was mad, that he had lost his mind or something. Then another guy, a few rows back, threw his oar down and began to sway the same way as the old man. Everyone was confused. Then a few more people started throwing down their oars and swaying in sync to each other. Nothing was said except, "rock!" The boat started to sway, just a little, from side to side, and the overseers were frantic to stop the swaying.

Continued on next page..

Contradictions Heighten at Menard

by an Illinois prisoner
December 2011

Here at Menard, a prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections, the prisoners have said "no more." We now are making a full and united front against the swine who confine us.

We have tried for years to voice our objections in a peaceful and civil manner to the hierarchy of this morally bankrupt system. However, these pigs refuse to listen. In fact it has now become completely and utterly impossible to exhaust any and all grievances with any kind of legally sound argument within its body, thereby stopping a prisoner from presenting any claim in any court.

Here in the segregation unit they have gathered together a group of sadistic pigs who torture at will. The head and ringleader of these cowards seems to be Officer Davis. The hierarchy put in cameras to curb the abuse. The piggies found blind spots, where prisoners' blood stains the concrete, and those responsible are allowed to hide.

There have been at least five severe and bloody staff assaults here in a row. The brass in their state capital keeps asking, why? Why, because you have left us with no other course of action. We have become intolerant of the consecutive abuses. We have finally found ourselves in a corner with nowhere to turn. I see no end to the bloodshed. Even after these pigs put those they believe responsible in extreme isolation, it continues!

Defiance and refusal to submit to these pigs has become a movement within itself. It has become much too large to squash. When things attain a certain size they become permanent. One can dredge a lake, but not an ocean.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This letter illustrates an important fact: when people are pushed into a corner, tortured and given no option of running away and no peaceful way to fight back, they will be forced into a violent response. It is ironic that the prisons are constantly censoring MIM(Prisons) as a threat to the security of the institution when it is their own policies and practices that threaten the safety of staff and prisoners the most!

We do want to point out that there is an alternative to short-term violence against the pigs. We need broader organization among our comrades behind bars so that they are not taken out one by one for fighting back. While we cannot judge individual cases of desperation, we know that the long battle is one that requires the building of unity and the education of our allies. ★

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...Unified Vision

an historical moment in the state of Texas. This gathering consisted of different organizations, and was the result of the Connally Unit's continued lack of responsibility.

As a result of this peaceful gathering, we were targeted and harassed by the 'gang intelligence' unit. Ms. Gonzalez and 30+ officers, all came out to the recreational yard and surrounded us as we sat on the ground discussing our reasons for coming together.

[After peacefully sitting in and presenting our complaints], one by one we were stripped and placed back into our cells. The whole building, which consists of 432 prisoners, got locked down for over 24 hours due to our actions and administration's lack of understanding.

Seeds were scattered that day and we shall continue to maintain the growth of these seeds for a better tomorrow. We have reason to believe that persistence and dedication will soon give us a beautiful 'rose within the garden.'

I hope that those who read this article familiarize themselves with past experiences before trying to engage in the same, from the uprisings in the plantation camps, to the more modern times; the Attica uprising and Georgia's historical lockdown December 2010, and the more recent, Pelican Bay fasting this year. Together we can move mountains!

We've also posted info about a planned strike in a New Mexican pre-trial facility with isolation conditions. And in North Carolina comrades were able to organize some outside support and letter writing among friends and family, despite what sounds like some setbacks in their planned food strike. All four groups produced similar lists of demands including such things as: access to legal research, health care, an end to censorship, adequate food and an end to the torturous conditions of isolation and sensory deprivation. We see comrades are rising to the oc-

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...Musings

They were whipping guys viciously, but no one would pick up the oars. In fact, more and more people were refusing to row now and the boat was rocking dangerously close to capsizing. The overseers were terrified and all that was heard was "rock!" The oars with the words "industries," "shirt factory," "wood products," "shoe factory," "dairy," "kitchen workers," "cooks" engraved into them were all just laying there, idle, and we told the overseers, "you want this boat rowed, then **you** do the rowing!"

About this time, I either work up or I snapped out of the fog I was in. My heart was racing. Am I mad? Is that really such a crazy thought? Or is it the most sanest, common sense thing that should have taken place years ago?

I thought about this as I drank my tea and the COs passed out breakfast. "Are you gonna eat?" the CO asked. "No" I replied, and with my heart still racing I thought to myself, crazy or not, I say "let's rock!" ★

casion with their own leadership and demands as Cipactli suggests on page 13 of this issue.

We would also refer back to the article in *Under Lock & Key* 23 that provided an analysis of the California food strike and focused on the importance of ensuring comrades are fully prepared for these actions before they begin. How a campaign is led will determine whether it is inspiring or discouraging to the larger prison population.

As we noted in that article: "One of the major lessons of this hunger strike is the need for a unifying organizational structure through which action can be coordinated and goals and information can be formulated and shared. The United Front for Peace in Prisons provides this opportunity by bringing together LOs and individuals who understand the importance of unity against the common enemy." While we agree with Cipactli on the advantages of tactical independence, the influence of the California strikes shows the importance of sharing experiences and lessons. And even more we should be working towards developing common goals and understanding to better act as one despite geographic divides. This is what the United Front for Peace is about. ★

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...Iran

Recently the United States threatened to trigger conflict with Iran when one of its unmanned drones allegedly lost control and flew into Iranian air space.(1) If it was Iran's drone that had flown over the United States, we would again see the double standard at play. Last month the Amerikans made unlikely accusations against Iran's Qods force that it plotted a terrorist attack in Washington DC with the Mexican drug cartel, Zeta. Amerikan politicians attack the Third World as "terrorists" and the internal semi-colonies as "gangs." While they tell fantastic stories(2) to link foreign terrorists with North American gangs, we work with lumpen in the United States to develop in a united front with the struggle of Third World peoples to end oppression and exploitation. Many people join the anti-imperialist movement out of persynal reasons (for instance fighting against the horrible conditions of imprisonment in Security Housing Units) but we need to broaden our thinking beyond our persynal struggles and see the connections to the oppressed of the world if we hope to make real and lasting change.

[UPDATE: In the month since this article was originally published online the U.S. has approved sanctions against Iran's central bank and the blocking of oil exports on the basis of IAEA reports on their nuclear program, some of which have been denounced by insiders. Iran has replied that it will block the Strait of Hormuz if the blockade is acted on. The U.S. plans to keep the strait open by force. Meanwhile an Iranian nuclear scientist was assassinated, with Iranian suspicions pointing to Israel and the U.S.] ★

Notes:

1. *Wall Street Journal*. 4 December 2011.

2. MIM. *Shutting down Control Units and the World Revolution*. October 2005.

- UNITED STRUGGLE FROM WITHIN -

Under Lock & Key is the main organizing tool of United Struggle from Within (USW). This page details some of the active campaigns that USW is involved in. Those who want to push the revolutionary struggle forward from behind bars should get involved in USW by working on these campaigns, or initiating their own.

FUNDING NEEDED TO FULFILL SUBSCRIPTIONS

In 2011 we had a big increase in subscriptions to *Under Lock & Key*. This is good news for the fight against the criminal injustice system: important news and organizing info is getting into the hands of more and more prisoners. But sending out more copies of *ULK* requires money for printing and postage. We need an additional \$350 per month to keep up with our expenses. Our volunteers provide most of our funding out of their own pockets but we are not keeping up with the expanding costs. We need you to help! Even if you don't have much, send us a few stamps or a small donation whenever you can. Get your people on the outside to send stamps or money. Without your help we can't keep *Under Lock & Key* growing!

CONDUCT RESEARCH SURVEY

As part of our developing research on the lumpen class in the United States, MIM(Prisons) and USW are working to develop a survey to study socio-economic data on U.S. prisoners. If you are interested in potentially administering the survey to prisoners in your area write in and let us know. If we can't get enough volunteers we may have to cancel the project, so step up to make this project possible.

SPREAD UNDER LOCK & KEY

The most basic task someone can do for USW is get people to subscribe to *Under Lock & Key*. If you know someone who likes this newsletter, have them write to get their own subscription. People are moved all the time in prison and it's better to get in contact when our address is available than to lose it in a move. It is also helpful if you ask other prison publications to run free ads for *Under Lock & Key* and MIM(Prisons)'s Free Books for Prisoners Program.

SHUT DOWN CONTROL UNITS

Control units are used as a tool of political repression to alienate and torture anyone who works for change from within prisons. Control units can be generally described as: Permanently designated prisons, or cells in prisons, that lock prisoners in solitary confinement for 22 or more hours a day with no congregate dining, exercise or other services, and virtually no programs for prisoners. Prisoners are placed in control units for extended periods of time.

Research - We have the most complete data on control units available published at www.abolishcontrolunits.org. Help keep it updated by writing to MIM(Prisons) at the address on page 1 to get a survey for your state.

WE DEMAND OUR GRIEVANCES ARE ADDRESSED

Comrades in Arizona, California, Colorado (NEW!), North Carolina (NEW!), Oklahoma, and Texas have developed petitions against the corrupt grievance process in their state. If you are experiencing problems with your grievance process, you should join this campaign.

Sign and Mail Petitions - If you are in the above-listed states, write in to get the petition for your state. If your prison's policies allow, donate stamps or envelopes to your comrades inside to send out the petition. Be sure you ask us for extra copies if you plan to distribute the petition and can't make your own.

Spread This Campaign - If your state is not currently covered by the grievance campaign, but you are experiencing a similar problem, volunteer to rewrite the petition to work for your state.

EXPAND STUDY GROUPS

Form a study group in your prison. Start by discussing this issue of *Under Lock & Key*. Choose what to study next based on what stumps you in this issue. If you want help from MIM(Prisons), it is best to come up with a general topic you're interested in, and we can suggest reading material and maybe a study pack. We can also help get the reading materials through to your comrades. As you study, you should compile study questions to create a study pack for future groups who want to study the same material. MIM(Prisons) runs Maoist study groups, but an in-persyn group may be better for those whose mail from us is being censored, or to reach people who wouldn't join our group.

FIGHT CENSORSHIP

Everyone should be sure to send MIM(Prisons) copies of your censorship documents for denied issues of *Under Lock & Key* and other mail from MIM Distributors.

Missouri - Prisoners in Missouri are spreading a petition against the ban and censorship of musical recordings with a parental advisory label, and historical, sociological, political, and religious books. Write in to get it! Like with all petitions, try to make your own copies, share them, and help others out with envelopes and stamps if your prison's policies allow it.

California - We are in an ongoing battle with prisons in California that have banned MIM Distributors, citing a defunct memo from 2006. We've recently compiled a Censorship Guide supplement to help those affected tackle this problem. Send us copies of your documentation and grievances you've filed against it.

BECOME A ULK FIELD CORRESPONDENT

The first thing we tell comrades in prison to do when they ask how they can help is to write about conditions where they're at. If you've written us a letter, then you have all the skills you need to become a *ULK* Field Correspondent.

Many prisoners write about the horrible things happening to them with the mindset that once the outside world finds out, their problems will be over and the perpetrators punished. This expectation is a myth, but it is still important to report on conditions through *ULK*.

Due to space restrictions, many of the reports we get don't make it into *ULK*. Instead they are available on our website, which serves as an archive tracking the behavior of prison staff over years. This is part of our scientific method, collecting empirical data in the field. When you complain about some pig throwing your mail in the trash and people don't listen because they think it was probably just an accident, we have documentation of hundreds of "accidents" by the same staff, proving that it was no accident at all. Your reports back up others' reports.

When reporting on conditions, details are good, but keep it short. Not only does someone have to type all these articles, but remember that it is not your one report that's gonna make a difference, it is the accumulation of reporting from across the country and the connections we make between those struggles. So leave room for others to tell their stories, which strengthens your own.

For the print version of *ULK*, we look for news and articles with theoretical and anti-imperialist content. We also want to feature articles that show how to organize against these conditions, and not just document them. MIM(Prisons) offers resources and opportunities to help you develop as a writer, including a Writing Guide and, for those who complete some of our study courses and become regular contributors to *ULK*, a *ULK* Writing Group. So get started today.

Advance the California Hunger Strike through Strategic Unity and Criticism

by a comrade of United Struggle from Within
November 2011

I have much unity with Loco1's piece [in *ULK* 23] concerning a strategic retreat. After reading his essay I now have some things I'd like to speak on concerning the strike. However, as I myself am not currently housed in the SHU my words should be taken merely as food for thought, as it is up to those participating directly in the movement to analyze their own conditions.

Firstly, I believe that the SHU prisoners are currently in a crucial period. They have successfully completed the first stage of their struggle but if they are to successfully complete the next stage then they must enter into a period of criticism/self-criticism as it is the best way to avoid any left-deviations or rightist errors. The SHU prisoners are the vanguard in this struggle and it is up to them if the movement moves forward or dies a humiliating death. By moving forward I in no way am implying that the struggle must continue full steam ahead regardless of their present conditions.

Loco1 is correct to point out the fact that this is a protracted struggle, and the SHU prisoners aren't going to go anywhere anytime soon, except to another SHU. This is especially true for the ones that are "validated"; they have all the time in the world to sit and hammer shit out. Or as the Afghans like to say of invading oppressor armies: "you have the clocks, but we've got the time."

Thus, here are some points of attention:

- The life and death of the struggle depends on the willingness of the prisoners to remain united. It is essential that contradictions between the oppressed and the oppressors do not become contradictions between the oppressed themselves.
- The main force of the movement are the SHU prisoners. The immediate reserves are the general population prisoners. Loco1 is correct to call out specific LOs as they have the ability and influence to organize the vast majority of the prison population. Therefore they should exert all their power and energy into catapulting the masses to complete victory.
- It is integral to the struggle that a correct political line should be developed so that the masses may gather round it to find guidance in the movement.
- Indeed, practice is principal but this is also the time for studying theoretical knowledge and to concentrate on concrete study, criticism and self-criticism. Weakness in the ideological level will turn into errors in the political field, which will ultimately manifest themselves into mistakes in the organizational level.

"Over a long period we have developed this concept for this struggle against the enemy: strategically we should despise all our enemies but tactically we should take them all

seriously. This also means we must despise the enemy with respect to the whole but that we must take him seriously with respect to each and every concrete question. If we do not despise the enemy with respect to the whole, we shall be committing the error of opportunism. But in dealing with concrete problems and particular enemies we shall be committing the error of adventurism unless we take them seriously. In war, battles can only be fought one by one and the enemy forces can only be destroyed one by one." - Mao Zedong

Knowing that the prisoncrats hate to lose ground to the prisoner population, whether it be an inch or a mile, it then becomes the duty of the strikers to focus all of their efforts into wiping out the most debilitating aspects of their oppression one-by-one. One way of doing this is to defang their paper tiger (SHU), thereby rendering it next to useless.

Some might argue that the most debilitating aspect of the SHU is the long-term isolation. We must keep in mind that the oppressors will never give up this method of torture and oppression; it's too effective.

Instead We must focus on winnable battles and while We can't at this time shut down the SHUs, We can fight going there.

It is the debriefing process that keeps people sent to the SHUs and locked in the SHUs past their kick-out dates, and it is the debriefing process that turns people into snitches and ensures that more people enter the SHUs rather than leave it.

If and when the debriefing process is finally defeated then the strikers can move on to a secondary and less crucial aspect of the 5 Core Demands (see *ULK* 21) which should then be able to gain primary importance, and so on and so forth. It is in this way that the piecemeal solution is applied.

Stay strong and stay committed!
All power to the oppressed!

Excerpts from a response by Cipactli of USW: I never got to read the piece on "strategic retreat" by Loco1 due to heavy censorship here, but wish to respond to the above. First, the struggle spear-headed by SHU prisoners is not exclusive to SHU prisoners... It should not become common for prisoners to rely on the "Pelican Bay vanguard" as this is dangerous. When a movement is focused on a leader or a certain group... if these leaders are imprisoned, neutralized or corrupted the movement crumbles.

...Of course there is a role for leaders as vanguard whether they be in prison or out in society, but it's a dangerous road for the movement when people begin to rely on the "Pelican Bay vanguard" and take on the attitude of "I'm not going to strike or protest this or that because Pelican Bay isn't doing it right now"... I see the damage this brings to future struggles and it really retards the political development of prison-

ers into participants rather than individual leaders themselves.

What we must keep in mind is prisons today are much different than what prisons were in the days of Attica or Santa Fe, etc. Today prisoners are more controlled; prison activists are quickly targeted, separated and isolated from the prison mass. More and more control units are designed to house the revolutionary prisoners. Even on a "mainline" of level four prisons in California you only go out to yard with the roughly 200 prisoners in your block, with the other 800 or so in their cells waiting their turn.

...Neither SHU prisoners nor any prisoners within the united front exist as a centralized party, nor was this strike movement built with any hierarchy. Although I agree a large amount of the prison vanguard can be found in SHU, to say whether the movement "moves forward or dies" is up to SHU prisoners kind of reduces the larger prison masses (general population) to bystanders or frees them from responsibility should the movement die "a humiliating death" as the writer put it. SHU prisoners are extremely limited in their ability to operate...

The fact that this effort included all LOs already shows that LOs comprehend the need to come together in a common effort; that hurdle has been completed. It is important that the imprisoned masses understand the concept of protracted struggle: it is a long drawn out effort in which, while practice is performed, the people are constantly studying and sharpening our ideologies. In this way we are wearing out the oppressor while building up the people politically.

I disagree with the proposal of the writer that we should focus on the debriefing process as primary focus. I think this will work to divide the people. The problem is not all prisoners in SHU are validated for "debriefing" information, as many people's validation did not even use information from debriefing... I believe the demand to close the SHU needs to be at the forefront and I'm surprised it was not included in the five demands of the strikes.

...The five demands were good, but as I pointed out above there are certainly more pressing issues that need to surface. The thing is to constantly *improve* on any effort one is involved in; move forward, not simply reproduce what occurred in Pelican Bay's torture chambers, but produce a stronger and more spectacular effort the next round... The Cultural Revolution was launched to *unleash* the people and have them not simply follow Mao's lead. It was to have the people *themselves* lead society to struggle in all different spheres, to *push* the "vanguard" forward, *move* society with all the creative energy of the masses and transform society and the vanguard. ★

See also "Push for a United Vision" on page 10.

SCDC's Illegal Ban and Inadequate Law Libraries

by a South Carolina prisoner
November 2011

Peace, comrades in the struggle! First and foremost, the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) is a modern day slave plantation. Being political is a crime within itself; once I became aware of the truth then the system considered me a threat. I'm a Black man in solitary confinement due to my passion to stay alive, and I strive to use this time to analyze my legal problems and how to continue to educate myself.

I write to this so-called law library to request certain law books and other legal material, but I am denied because the law library is not up to date and lacks current books we need. So I reached out to receive The Georgetown Law Journal 2010 Edition from Georgetown Law. I was denied permission to purchase that journal out of my own funds. Then I wrote to Prison Legal News, South Chicago ABC Zine Distro, Justice Watch, Turning the Tide, the Maoist Prison Cell, the National Lawyers Guild and the Center for Constitutional Rights. All these organizations sent me material but I was denied access to have the material and it was sent back because of the so-called policies OP 22.12 and PS 10.08.

The SCDC has designated a ban on all magazines, newspapers, books, photos, etc. that come from outside sources, whether it be from publishing companies or organizations. In Special Management Unit, where prisoners are housed 23 hours a day behind a locked door, SCDC mandates all above material must come from its institutional library, whereupon no newspapers or magazines are allowed, period. Only the inadequate out-of-date law books and library books. Because of this ban many people suffer from lack of information and educational and legal materials.

And the thing about it is the mailroom staff has a list of names of publications that aren't allowed to send mail to this institution. She has no education in security besides searching mail for contraband.

I have limited information I can use to fight oppression as a whole. I have offered my problems at the hands of my oppressor to hopefully serve as a springboard for further war against oppression. Times do get hectic, and recently I was placed in a full restraint chair off the words of another prisoner's statement! I am aware of some cases that deal with censorship, so I'm doing my research the best way possible even though the law books inside the library don't have cases past 2001. Of course I'm aware of the Prison Litigation Reform Act; that's why I am going through the grievance procedures now. I will continue fight this system and hopefully my voice will be heard outside of these walls.

SCDC has no educational programs so it's

Continued on page 16...

Perdidos en la Traducción

por USW C-4 de United Struggle from Within
November 2011

¿Sí se puede o no se puede? ¿Cuál es señor presidente?

A principio del 2008 empezamos a oír del entonces candidato presidencial Barack Obama que si fuera elegido tomaría acción rápida de la reforma migratoria. Durante este tiempo también empezó a extraviarse a la izquierda de la opinión corriente de la burguesía por insinuar su disgusto con los allanamientos de los lugares de trabajo a los indocumentados. Tampoco, nunca se molestó a mencionar nada sobre la muchísima gente indocumentada que supuestamente cometió algún "crimen" en cruzar la borde mexicano/estadounidense cuando dio su discurso al Concilio Nacional de La Raza.(1)

De verdad, declaraciones como estas sobre el tema de la reforma migratoria ayudó popularizar al senador de Illinois entre los Latinos lo cual le ayudó quitarle el voto latino a la entonces Senadora de Nueva York Hilary Clinton. (2) Aun aquí estamos tres años lejos de la elección del primer presidente negro de los Estados Unidos y el tiempo nos ha enseñado otra vez de nuevo que Barack Obombadero como cualquier otro político estadounidense no tiene nada más que ofrecer a las naciones oprimidas más que promesas quebradas y más opresión.

Un millón de gente han sido deportados de los Estados Unidos desde la toma de oficina de Obombadero en el 2009; es decir 400,000 deportaciones al año con las varias naciones latinas porteadando lo peor.(3) También es importante notar que los números de deportación han aumentado desde a administración previa de Bush y son históricamente más alta en comparación de las 500,000 gente quien fueron literalmente "ferrocarrilados" a México entre los años 1929-39 en lo que los imperialistas llamaron "arreares de repatriación." Esto además que no toda la gente eran ciudadanos Mexicanos.(4)

Más recientemente, los EE UU iniciaron las deportaciones masas bajo el capo de un programa federal costado por la administración Obombadero llamado "comunidades seguras" en que oficiales de ICE (Inmigración y Coacción Aduanera) en conjunción con policías locales por toda la nación buscan a los indocumentados y llevan a cabo allanamientos contra ellos.(3) Los allanamientos son llevados a cabo del encabezamiento de "operaciones fugitivas." (3)

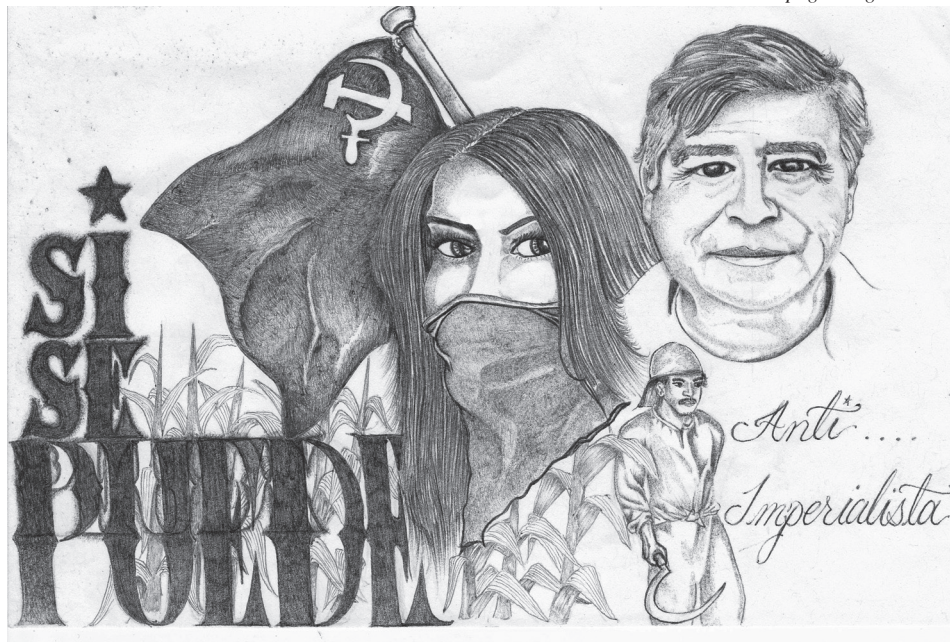
Al principio los policías locales tenían la opción de unirse a comunidades seguras pero muchos de ellos vacilaron previniendo los problemas potenciales que esto podría causar a sus funciones diarios de ocupares de las semicolónias internas también a su vigilar de vecindades con alta densidad de población migrante recién llegados.(3) ICE eventualmente los pudo vender comunidades seguras a los puercos después de decirles que solamente buscarían a "los peores de los peores." (3)

Según la portavoz del gobierno, una mitad de la gente quien han sido deportados desde el 2009 eran delincuentes violentos, pero investigaciones sobre el programa han revelado que mucha de la gente siendo deportada actualmente fueron deportados debido a infracciones menores, tal como Señora Ramírez quien fue arrestada por policías locales por una infracción menor de auto; fue mandada a un centro de detención federal y seguido deportada a México desde Maple Park, Illinois todo en el espacio de unos pocos días a despecho de que no tenía fondo de criminal y estaba criando hijos nacidos estadounidenses.(3)

¿Pero sería que Señora Ramírez era una de las afortunadas si se considere las circunstancias? La respuesta es sí.

Ciudades de acampamiento, viviendas apretadas, ningún derecho a abogados, el racismo, el abuso verbal, el abuso mental, golpizas y el asalto sexual. Esta es la realidad dura que espera a los indocumentados en cuanto son aprisionados y deportados a las manos de estadounidenses.

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es.(3)

...Perdidos ¿Que Vendrá?

Un caso en punto es el Centro de Detención e Inmigración Federal en Willacy, Téjas donde una investigación reciente por el ACLU determinó que había "abuso sexual muy extensiva de las detenidas y un sistema de injusticia sistemáticamente posesionada sin ninguna responsabilidad firmemente intacto."(3) Esta información fue corroborada más por guardias y un psiquiatra, que eran empleados anteriormente por Willacy, quien dieron cuentas del abuso al contrario de comprobación de cuentas que hizo el ICE en donde se le dio un grado de "BIEN."(3)

Durante este tiempo el departamento de ICE también condujo una encuesta de los presos supuestamente para ayudarles registrarse las quejas. Desafortunadamente la encuesta no era nada más que un truco compuesto y conducido por ICE sí mismo para poner en la mirada a los quien intentaban registrar quejas y disuadirlos de que siguen por manera de amenazar verbales. (3)

Entonces, ¿qué es lo que la población migrante de los EEUU podrá esperar? Bueno, si la realidad corriente y el número de gente corrientemente encarcelados en prisiones Americanas puede servir como una indicación de lo que vendrá, entonces podemos esperar que el país con el porcentaje más alta de su población detrás de las rejas ahora se convierta en el país con el porcentaje más alta de nacionales extranjeros detrás de sus rejas. Más evidencia de como los Estados Unidos oprime la mayoría del mundo. En verdad, prisioneros políticos.

Los críticos liberales de comunidades seguras como el ACLU han apuntado que el programa de comunidades seguras es nada más que la política de la administración Bush inflada con las esteroides de Obama.(5) Aunque tendríamos que concordar también tendríamos que ir más lejos. ¡Comunidades seguras es el utilizado del sistema de injusticia Americana como una resolución substituta para su población migrante quien ellos desalojaron en el primer lugar! Los descendientes de los habitantes originales en esta tierra migran a los EEUU para trabajar a los trabajos que los Americanos no harán, ganando

menos salarios que los estadounidenses. Pero, sólo son tantos trabajos no queridos que necesita obreros, y frontera abiertas resultarían en una igualación en salarios Americanos con el resto del mundo – el miedo más grande de la aristocracia obrera. Esta realidad económica, junto con amenazas políticas que una población oprimida creciente dentro de las fronteras estadounidense propone, explica por qué los EE UU se fijan en controlar estrictamente a los emigrantes (en particular los que cruzan el Rio Grande)

En un discurso en El Paso, Téjas al comienzo de este año el Presidente Obombadero otra vez andaba mintiendo y hablando por los dos lados de su boca cuando dijo que no habría ninguna reforma comprensiva de inmigración por la culpa de los tercos republicanos.(3) La línea final, no habrá reforma comprensiva de inmigración y va a seguir "cumplimiento forzoso en esteroides." No reforma quiere decir que el requisito, bajo comunidades seguras de la demandada cuota de deportación de 400,000 anual según un memorándum interno de ICE va a continuar para seguir recibiendo fondos del Congreso.(3)

Cuando se le preguntó a Cecilia Muñoz, una oficial de alta nivel con el departamento de Asuntos Interiores de la administración de Obama, sobre el golpazo que estos tipos de números tendrán en las familias migrantes en los Estados Unidos, ella respondió con retórica típica de la nación opresora, dijo que, "familias quebradas son el resultado de leyes quebradas." Luego dijo que todo era parte del problema de inmigración.(3)

A este pincho vendido le respondemos todo al contrario, no hay ningún problema migratorio pero sí hay un problema del imperialismo y en realidad es el problema número uno en el mundo ahora; principalmente el imperialismo estadounidense.

Después de la deportación de Susana Ramírez hubo un esfuerzo para que voten y pasen una declaración del senado para negar fondos para el programa de comunidades seguras de ICE. La declaración se llamaba "La Ley de Susana", y fue negada.(3) ★

Notas:

1. Profesora Alexa Saragoza, *Chicano 50*, Vol. 1 p.20
2. *Ibid.* p24
3. *Frontline: Lost in Detention* (Frontline: Perdido en la detención), PBS, 10/18/2011
4. Autor Desconocido, *History of the Chicano People* (Historia del pueblo chicano), pg 48.
5. Joanne Lin for ACLU. 18 August 2011 "Agreed: Facts Matter on Immigrant Detention and Deportation."

El MIM(Prisiones)

El Ministro Maoísta Internacional de Prisiones, MIM(Prisiones), es una célula de revolucionarios que sirve las masas opresas adentro de las prisiones de los EEUU.. Mantenemos la ideología comunista revolucionaria del Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoísmo y trabajamos del punto del proletariado del tercer mundo.

El imperialismo es el enemigo número uno de la mayoría de gente del mundo, no podemos obtener nuestra meta de terminar toda opresión sin derribar el imperialismo. La historia nos ha mostrado que el imperialista hará guerra antes de permitir un fin a la opresión.

Como revolucionarios internacionalistas, nos apoyamos la auto-determinación de todas naciones y gente. Hoy, el sistema de prisiones de los EEUU es un parte mayor del estado imperialista siendo usado para prevenir la auto-determinación de las naciones opresas. Es por esta razón que vemos a prisioneros en este país como manteniendo la delantera de cualquier movimiento anti-imperialista y revolucionario. Mientras que nuestra organización se enfoca en apoyo al prisionero, creemos que hay una necesidad grave de trabajo para el Maoísta en organizar y educar en muchas áreas en los Estados Unidos. Tenemos la esperanza que alguna gente se inspire por nuestro ejemplo alrededor de prisiones y que lo aplique a su propio trabajo para crear más células maoísta y amplíe el movimiento Maoísta detrás de las líneas del enemigo.

MIM(Prisiones) se distingue de otros grupos en los siguientes seis puntos. Consideramos que las otras organizaciones que activamente mantienen estos puntos ser fraternal.

1. El comunismo es nuestra meta. El comunismo es una sociedad en donde ningún grupo tiene poder sobre cualquier otro grupo.

2. Una dictadura del proletariado es necesario. En una dictadura del proletariado la mayoría explotada anterior dicta a la minoría (el que promovió la explotación) como la sociedad se debe conducir. En el caso de naciones imperialistas, una dictadura junta del proletariado de naciones opresas (JDPON) debe hacer este papel en donde no hay proletariado interno o una base significativa de masas que favorece comunismo.

3. Promovemos una frente unida contra todos los que se oponen al imperialismo. El camino al JDPON sobre las naciones imperialista incluye unir todos aquellos que se puedan unir contra el imperialismo. No podemos pelear el imperialismo y pelear otras que están ocupadas en conflictos de vida o muerte con el imperialismo a la misma vez. Aun las clases de una nación imperialista pueden ser aliados en el frente unido bajo ciertas condiciones.

4. Una clase parasítica domina los países del primer mundo. Como Marx, Engels, y Lenin formularon y la idea de MIM ha reiterado a través de análisis materialista, el imperialismo extrae súper-ganancias del Tercer Mundo y en parte usa esta riqueza para comprar poblaciones enteras de supuestos trabajadores. Estos supuestos trabajadores comprados por el imperialismo forman una nueva burguesía pequeña - llamada la aristocracia de labor, ellos no son un vehículo para el Maoísmo. Aquellos que trabajan en los intereses económicos de la aristocracia de labor del primer mundo forman la base de masas para apretar el agarre de la muerte del tercer mundo por el imperialismo

5. Nuevas burguesías se formarán bajo el socialismo. Mao guió la marcha para exponer la burguesía que se desarrolló adentro del partido comunista en la Unión Soviética y la campaña para bombardear los cuarteles generales en su propio país de China. Esas experiencias demostraron la necesidad de revolución continua bajo la dictadura del proletariado. La lucha de clases no se termina hasta que el estado haya sido anulado y el comunismo se haya alcanzado.

6. La Gran Revolución Cultural de Proletariado en China fue el avance más lejano hacia al comunismo en la historia. Mantenemos la Unión Soviética hasta la muerte de Stalin en 1953, seguido por la Republica de la gente de China a través de 1976 como los ejemplos mejores del socialismo moderno en la práctica. El arresto de la "Pandilla de Cuatro" en China y la subida de Khrushchev en la Unión Soviética marcaron la restauración del capitalismo en esos países. Otros experimentos en el desarrollo del socialismo en el siglo 20 fallaron de sobrepasar el modelo Soviético (es decir: Albania) o peor, se quedó adentro del modelo capitalista de producción, generalmente por la falla de romper con la teoría de fuerzas productivas.

¿Quieres leer más en español?

Tenemos algunos libros y revistas revolucionarios. Escríbenos para pedir algunos. En cambio por la literatura gratuita pedimos que nos mandes algo de trabajo. Escríbenos un artículo, forma un grupo de estudio, mándenos algún arte, lo que puedas hacer para contribuir a la lucha revolucionaria.

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ATTENTION PRISONERS:

You must write to us every 6 months to stay on our mailing list.
Tell us what mail you've gotten since the last time you wrote so we can track and fight censorship.

16

Under Lock & Key No. 24, January/February 2012

...Continued from page 14

...Law Library

more about self-education, but as you see I'm limited on that also. They have even started feeding prisoners in here two meals on Saturday and Sunday due to so-called budget cuts, but Monday through Friday we receive three meals per day. This is a very hard battle but my will is to survive physically and mentally until there's no fighting left. I hope you can continue to send me updated info because I can receive up to five pages of material printed out like the Censorship Pack you recently sent. Thanks for your support.

MIM(Prisons) Legal Coordinator adds: Since

2010, MIM Distributors and South Carolina prisoners have been challenging the policy of "no periodicals allowed on lock-up unit." From our study of case law, we don't believe that this policy could withstand the scrutiny of the higher courts, but to date all prisoncrats who have responded to our letters have upheld the censorship and/or evaded our direct questioning.

SCDC is not the only prison administration that is more interested in political repression than rehabilitation. Because national oppression is the name of the game, all prisoncrats try to push the boundaries of legality, and fortunately bourgeois democracy sometimes get in their way. Regarding this particular type of repression, we have received similar reports from prisoners held in North Carolina, California, Connecticut, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania.

It is a set-up for backwardness, which is the obvious goal: no programming, no reading materials, and you are barely able to prepare a lawsuit. They can't actually expect prisoners to reform.

As a movement, we are held back by this censorship in South Carolina. But rather than it defeating us, we should be inspired to push even harder to spread *ULK*, the United Struggle from Within, and the United Front for Peace in Prisons where we are able. Comrades affected by censorship should file grievances and go to court if necessary, so that conditions where they are don't mirror South Carolina's.★

...Continued from page 3

...SNY

prisoners who run off to SNY. But prison is never easy, and as long as a comrade is engaging in solid and consistent political work, and not selling out his fellow prisoners, we don't care that s/he got moved to SNY to avoid personal danger. Prisoners are constantly fighting legal battles to get moved away from dangerous prisons to places they hope will be better. Conditions are so bad in all prisons that this is rarely a significant change, but we won't tell anyone they have to stay in a situation that's dangerous to them if they have an alternative that doesn't involve endangering others.

As for the criticism of the facts in the Hunger Strike article, we take this very seriously. We rely on our comrades behind bars to report the facts about the prisons where they reside, but we do try to check facts wherever we can. In this case we should have caught this error about PVSP. It does not change the point made in that article calling for unity, but it's important we get facts correct. ★

