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Publication of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

Relevance of Nationalism to the Prison Movement

by ULK Editor of MIM(Prisons)
May 2012

Among those in the United States who have consistently upheld the right to self-determination of the internal semi-colonies, there has been some questioning of the MIM line that the principal contradiction within the United States is nation. With the degree of integration and buying off of the oppressed nations that has occurred since the Black/Brown/Red Power era some have questioned if the lumpen underclass are the only real revolutionary force left in the internal semi-colonies. Others have pointed to the level of wealth in the United States to dismiss the potential for national liberation struggles within U.S. borders without offering a new thesis on the principal contradiction. MIM(Prisons) has entertained the integration question and the possibility of a growing class contradiction across nation and will address both in more detail in an upcoming book.

In this issue of *Under Lock & Key* we feature a number of articles that demonstrate the dominant role that nationality plays in how our world develops and changes. The history of MIM's work with prisoners comes from its understanding of the principal contradiction in this country being between the oppressor white/Amerikan nation and the oppressed internal semi-colonies (New Afrika, Aztlán, Boricua, countless First Nations, etc.). It is through that work that it became clear that the quickly expanding prison system of the time was the front lines of the national struggle.

USW C-4 gets at this in h review of *MIM Theory 11* where s/he discusses the need to launch "the new prison movement in connection with the national liberation struggles which have been repressed and stagnated by the oppressors with mass incarceration." (see page 7) Progress in our struggle against the injustice system is progress towards re-establishing the powerful national liberation struggles that it served to destroy in the first place. Any prison movement not based politically in the right to self-determination of the nations locked up cannot complete the process of ending the oppression that we are combatting in the United States.

MIM(Prisons) focuses our mission around the imprisoned lumpen in general whose material interests are united by class, even though the injustice system is primarily about national oppression. Within the imprisoned class, we see the white prison population having more to offer than the white population in general for revolutionary organizing. Even non-revolutionary white prisoners are potential allies in the mate-



rial struggles that we should be taking up today around issues like censorship, long-term isolation, the right to associate/organize, access to educational programs, a meaningful grievance process and accountability of government employees in charge of over 2 million imprisoned lives. Just as we must be looking to recruit oppressed nation lumpen to the side of the world's people to prevent them from playing the role of the fascist foot soldier, this concern is even greater among the white lumpen and is a question we should take seriously as our comrade in Oregon discusses on page 7.

In this issue we have the typical reports from both Black and Latino comrades being labelled gang members and validated for their political and cultural beliefs. This is nothing less than institutionalized national oppression, which is at the heart of the proposed changes in the California validation system that are somehow supposed to be a response to the complaints of the thousands of prisoners who have been periodically going on food strike over the last year (see article this page).

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Organization vs. Validation:

Oppose CDCR's "New" Proposal

by a Connecticut prisoner
April 2012

Below is a response to "Validation Leads to Longer Sentences for Oppressed Nations" from *ULK 24*. I would like to say first and foremost that I feel for these brothers in the state of California. From what I can tell the gang validation program in California is what the Department of Corrections (DOC) in Connecticut call Security Risk Group (SRG). Our system is also corrupt but the process seems harder in this state. We also have a Safety Threat Member (STM) designation, which is a more severe version of an SRG. STM is for someone with a leadership role, or a repeat offender.

I believe if the California comrades looked at the DOC's model over here it would help in presenting a more productive model for them to use in reform. They used to be able to designate us at will with no evidence. Now it goes by a point system. A tattoo is not enough to designate you alone. And when you finish the program here, there's no debrief. You just have a piece of paper of renunciation; no information is needed. They have found ways to corrupt this process, of course, but it is a step up from what California is doing to our comrades.

Our mission is to put an end to these methods altogether, but I believe there are steps in that process. Not only should we be giving a list of demands, but also presenting a model for reform that honors our human rights as well as our due process rights.

MIM(Prisons) responds: California Prison Focus, a reformist organization focused on issues related to SHU prisoners, recently put out an issue of their newsletter almost entirely devoted to analysis and criticism of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR's) proposal for a new gang validation system.(1) The CDCR's proposal rests on a point system similar to the one used in Connecticut. A point system might make it more challenging for prison staff to frivolously send someone to a control unit indefinitely, but only if the evidence used to calculate the points is disclosed. Another key difference in the Connecticut DOC's system is that it lacks a debriefing process, and is therefore not as self-perpetuating as the CDCR's.

It may be a tactical advantage to model our reforms off of those which have led to some improvements in other localities. This would depend on the conditions in each location and

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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.

Debating the Need for New Organizations: Cell Structure and United Fronts

by an Oregon prisoner
May 2012

So often I hear about all these "new" groups popping up, and I can only laugh. It's 2012, there is nothing "new." The foundation for our political beliefs has already been laid. There is nothing "new" about these stances/agendas and their supposed political beliefs. The only thing that is different is the day and age we live in. The root of our problem remains the same, the haves oppress the have-nots.

There are any number of them, with a wide range, variety and jumbled assortment of colorful names. The names range from political to outright comical in wording/phrasing. Some state just who and what they are. Some are rather ambiguous and then others are as laughable and colorful as a male peacock strutting in full plumage. And as we're aware, no matter how a peacock struts, it hides in the trees the first time a storm threatens.

If anything these groups present more of a problem, because of the loud, attention-craving racket, and absolutely no productive political action, they cause the people (the ones we struggle for) to laugh and not take anyone serious. All they see is the "bells and whistles" of colorful names. This takes away from the sincere, actual revolutionaries striving to bring about the true and necessary changes and reforms to society which is needed to overcome the corrupt imperialist swine oppressing us.

Remember, that's the goal. To bring communism to the forefront of political power. Not to be dividing into numerous groups with no true moral fortitude to accomplish what's needed. Each time I see or hear about "new" groups claiming to have and hold the same beliefs, views and stances as already well-established, virtuous organizations are already firmly grounded. It presents me with a question: why?

Why are these people so eager to form "new" groups? And why aren't they able to fit in with the already proven, reliable and established organizations? The answer I come up with is disturbing but can only ring true: Because these people lack of true moral fiber, and they possess one or more character flaws that prevent them from being accepted in and part of an already structured, active and producing organization. They are unable to follow the rules and regulations and necessary leadership to steer the group, and society as a whole, towards the ultimate goal: revolutionary change to overcome the oppression from the capitalist/imperialist swine. It's either that or these individuals who start "new" groups have outrageous delusions of grandeur, so they hop from group to group or create their own groups all in hopes to try and get their fix of feeling "important."

We can all attest to the effect that there is no possible way to trust someone who hops from group to group, from cause to cause, showing absolutely no loyalty to anyone or even to their

own proclaimed beliefs.

So, since there are already well-established, grounded and virtuous groups out there being productive, find one! And devote your time, support and efforts to an organization already striving for the ultimate goal we're all struggling for. The entire point of this struggle is to work together, as one, for a common goal. And only in uniting will that goal be reached.

Quite frankly it's insulting to see or hear a new colorful name or term like "gangsta this" or "gangsta that." Are ya serious? That's embarrassing, especially when all those character-flawed people are trying to do is get attention to their no-account group by using a virtuous group to put their group name in print because none of their actions are meritorious enough to be deemed worthy of it any other way.

Truly I hope not another group's name is printed. If you're a Maoist, then that's name enough. In closing, stop dividing and start uniting. As one people, in one struggle, doing one work, to overcome the imperialist pigs who oppress us.

MIM(Prisons) responds: On the one hand, we agree with this comrade on the importance of not forming new groups just for the sake of recognition or self-aggrandizement (see "Building New Groups Vs. Working with USW and MIM(Prisons)" in *ULK 21*). Ultimately we need unity behind common Maoist principles for successful revolutionary struggle. However, at this current stage of struggle within imperialist Amerika, there is a practical need for organizing in a cell structure, where regional independence provides security.

As we have demonstrated in our work with even the best of these new organizations which are claiming to uphold Maoism, we hold everyone to a high standard of work and don't just look at the labels and names they choose. This was seen in our work with the New Afrikan Maoist Party (NAMP) with whom we found some significant developing disagreements over line and strategy. We published a self-criticism in *ULK 16* about our working relationship with that group.

The other important point to make here is that we should not hold everyone to the standard of Maoism to work with them. We need as many strong committed revolutionary comrades as possible. But for those individuals who are not at the level of communist theory, we can unite around anti-imperialist goals in a United Front. We don't want these folks blindly signing up for Maoism; we would rather they study and learn through practice about the value and seriousness of communism. And if there is no anti-imperialist cell or organization in their place, we support the creation of such a group. It is in forging this unity that we are building the United Front for

South Carolina Struggles and Lumpen Organizing

by a Federal prisoner
April 2012

I am writing to *ULK* to keep readers informed about what is going on inside the federal prison system. After receiving the last issue, I was enlightened to the status of a movement that is going on in South Carolina state prison system. I have spent a long time in the lock units of the SC state prisons and know them very well.

I have firsthand knowledge about the very beginning of the United Gangster movement that is growing in the prison system of that state. I am glad to hear that it's becoming more organized because I didn't have good expectations that it would make it this far.

I know how fearful the administration was about a movement taking place inside the prison, and how the SHU was used to stop prisoners who were supposed to be involved in this movement. I will continue to fight censorship of everything associated with anti-imperialism and the prison industry.

MIM(Prisons) responds: There are many lumpen organizations with origins in the streets and prisons focused on getting what they can for their members, often at the expense of the people. But these organizations can refocus and develop correct political leadership. We look to unite with all LOs who can get behind the five points of the United Front for Peace in Prisons. (p. 2) This does not require organizations to take up Maoism, but the points are a minimum basis for anti-imperialist unity in our prisons organizing. ★

Prisoner Hunger Strike in Texas

by a Texas prisoner
April 2012

April 19 2012 - Greetings comrades in struggle. Here in Texas at Clements Unit I am engaging in a hunger strike in protest of the gang of racist officers systematically targeting New Afrikan prisoners with hate as a mechanism to control or punish us. I've sent in numerous grievances and complaints to the administration to no avail.

I'm in the high security building as an ad-

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Peace in Prisons (see page 2) and this is the basis for the names of groups being printed in *Under Lock & Key* declaring their participation in this United Front. We do our best to verify that these groups have an actual progressive practice, but we cannot be everywhere checking out everything, so we rely on our comrades to vet these organizations and look at their work over time for confirmation of their anti-imperialist orientation. In line with this comrade's critique, we have shifted our focus for United Front writings in *ULK* to practical reports, rather than statements of unity that were causing more trouble than they were worth. ★

...Continued from page 1 **...Nationalism in Prison**

While we support the day-to-day struggles that unite as many prisoners as possible, we are clear that these are only short-term struggles and stepping stones to our greater goals. The most advanced work comrades can be doing is directly supporting and promoting revolutionary nationalism and communism within disciplined organizations based in scientific theory and practice. An example of a more advanced project is a current USW study cell that is developing educational and agitational materials around Chicano national liberation. Meanwhile, the United Front for Peace in Prisons, while focused on mass organizations, is laying the groundwork for the type of cross-nation unity that will be needed to implement the Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Oppressed Nations required to truly end imperialist oppression and exploitation (see our 6 Points p. 2).

It is no coincidence that the word *fascism* comes up a number of times in this issue focused on national struggles. In terms of the principal contradiction between imperialist nations and the oppressed nations they exploit, fascism is the imperialist nation's reaction to successful struggles of the oppressed nations; when the oppressed have created a real crisis for imperialism; when Liberalism no longer works. While fascism is defined by imperialism, being guided by imperialist interests, it is the labor aristocracy in the imperialist countries that form the main force for fascism.(1) Again, this breaks down to the national question where oppressor nations and oppressed nations take up opposite sides of the principal contradiction that defines the United States as a phenomenon.

Rashid of the NABPP-PC (see review next page) suggests in his book *Defying the Tomb*, that "right-wing militias, survivalists and military hobbyists" are "potential allies" who "have a serious beef with imperialist monopoly capitalism." In contrast, we recognize that the principal contradiction that defines the imperialist system is between the imperialist nations and the oppressed nations they exploit. Americans calling for closed borders to preserve white power are the epitome of what imperialism is about, despite their rhetoric against the "bankers." It is the same rhetoric that was used to rally the struggling petty bourgeoisie around the Nazi party to preserve the German nation. It is the same rhetoric that makes the anti-globalization and "99%" movements potential breeding

grounds for a new Amerikan fascism.

Recent events in Greece, France and elsewhere in Europe have shown this to be the case in other imperialist countries, which are also dependent on the exploitation of the Third World. While Greece, where the European crisis is currently centered, cannot be described as an imperialist power on its own, its close ties to Europe have the Greek people convinced that they can regain prosperity without overthrowing imperialism. Social democrats are gaining political power in the face of austerity measures across Europe, while fascist parties are also gaining popular support in those countries. Together they represent two sides of the same coin, struggling to maintain their nation's wealth at the expense of others, which is why the Comintern called the social democrats of their time "social fascists." Austerity measures are the problems of the labor aristocracy, not the proletariat who consistently must live in austere conditions until they throw the yoke of imperialism off of their necks.

The fragility of the European Union along national lines reinforces the truth of Stalin's definition of nation, and supports the thesis that bourgeois internationalism bringing peace to the world is a pipe dream, as MIM has pointed out. (2) On the contrary, the proletariat has an interest in true internationalism. For the oppressed nations in the United States bribery by the imperialists, both real and imagined, will create more barriers to unity of the oppressed. So we have our work cut out for us.

Looking to the Third World, the struggle of the Tuareg people in West Africa (page 9) parallels in some ways the questions we face in the United States around Aztlán, the Black Belt and other national territories, in that their land does not correspond with the boundaries of the nation-state that they find themselves in as a result of their colonization. And the greater context of this struggle and the relation of the Tuareg people to Ghaddafi's Libya demonstrates the potentially progressive nature of the national bourgeoisie, as Ghaddafi was an enemy to U.S. imperialism primarily due to his efforts at supporting Pan-Africanism within a capitalist framework.

Nationalism of the oppressed is the antithesis to the imperialist system that depends on the control and exploitation of the oppressed. It is for that reason that nationalism in the Third World, as well as nationalism in the internal semi-colonies of the United States, are the primary focus of anti-imperialist organizing. As long as we have imperialism, we will have full prisons and trigger-happy police at home, and bloody wars and brutal exploitation abroad. Countering Amerikan nationalism with nationalism of the oppressed is the difference between entering a new period of fascism and liberating huminity from imperialism. ★

notes:

1. see "The labor aristocracy is the main force for fascism" from MIM's 2005 Congress

2. see MIM Congress Resolution on the European Union 2005

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...CDCR Proposal

time. A point system is slightly more objective than the CDCR's earlier protocol of identifying just three pieces of evidence, which were often kept secret as "confidential." But as Ed Mead reports in *Prison Focus*,

The stated purpose [of CDCR's proposal] is still to "prohibit inmates from creating, promoting, or participating in any club, association, or organization, except as permitted by written instructions."(1)

MIM(Prisons) stands in strong opposition to this stated goal of the CDCR in our efforts to support prisoners in organizing themselves for democratic rights as a class and for self-determination of the oppressed nations.

The U.S. government uses the domestic injustice system to justify the denial of democratic and Constitutional rights to a growing segment of its internal semi-colonies. The recent CDCR proposal refuses to eliminate the use of secret evidence to put people in SHU, which is a denial of due process. Meanwhile, not only is SHU used to punish people for associating with others, but the recent proposal includes plans to expand the range of Security Threat Groups targeted for repression. If these policies were implemented for the overall population we would call it fascism. Organizing strategies of our comrades behind bars should reflect this reality.

What is so sinister about the debriefing process, why it has been a primary target of the anti-SHU struggle, is because the statements given are used as secret evidence to put others in SHU for indefinite sentences, translating to years if not decades, in long-term isolation torture cells. As long as this continues, and as long as prisoners are denied basic First Amendment rights of association then we see no progress in the "new" proposal.

MIM(Prisons) calls for the abolition of long-term isolation, as it is a form of torture that destroys humyn beings. In addition, the way it is used attacks whole nations by targeting leaders of the oppressed and isolating them from the masses. There are reforms that could weaken the second effect, but people would still be tortured unless control units are abolished completely. The proposed point system barely puts a dent in either problem and can hardly even be considered a reform. Therefore we stand with the broad consensus among prisoners opposing the proposal, and call on supporters on the outside to do the same to remove all legitimacy from the government's attempts to keep the oppressed from organizing for any purpose. ★

Note: *Prison Focus*, Number 38 Spring 2012. California Prison Focus 1904 Franklin Street, Suite 507, Oakland, CA 94612

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.

Special Literature Offers Ask for it when you write us!

Spanish: Old MIM lit en español.

MIM Notes: Old MIM Notes, the defunct newspaper of the Maoist Internationalist Movement.

A Critique of Rashid's Black Liberation in the 21st Century

by a comrade of United Struggle from Within
May 2012

This is a response to an article titled "Black Liberation in the 21st Century: A Revolutionary Reassessment of Black Nationalism," by the New Afrikan Black Panther Party - Prison Chapter's Minister of Defense, Rashid. Rashid's article has been published in a number of places.

My writing will not analyze Black Nationalism per se, rather it aims to address the "national question" itself. My position comes from a Chicano perspective, which I hope adds to the theoretical sauce surrounding the idea of national liberation and the development of the oppressed nations ideologically, whether they be from the Brown, Black or Red Nations here in the United States. In the contemporary prisoner, one sees an awakening to truth and meaning amidst a state offensive to deprive millions of humyn dignity and freedom. The roundups, ICE raids and fascist laws (reinforced with putting the data of millions of oppressed across the U.S. into the state intelligence files preparing for future revolt and repression) has added to the swirl of these times for people to become politicized, and prisoners are no exception.

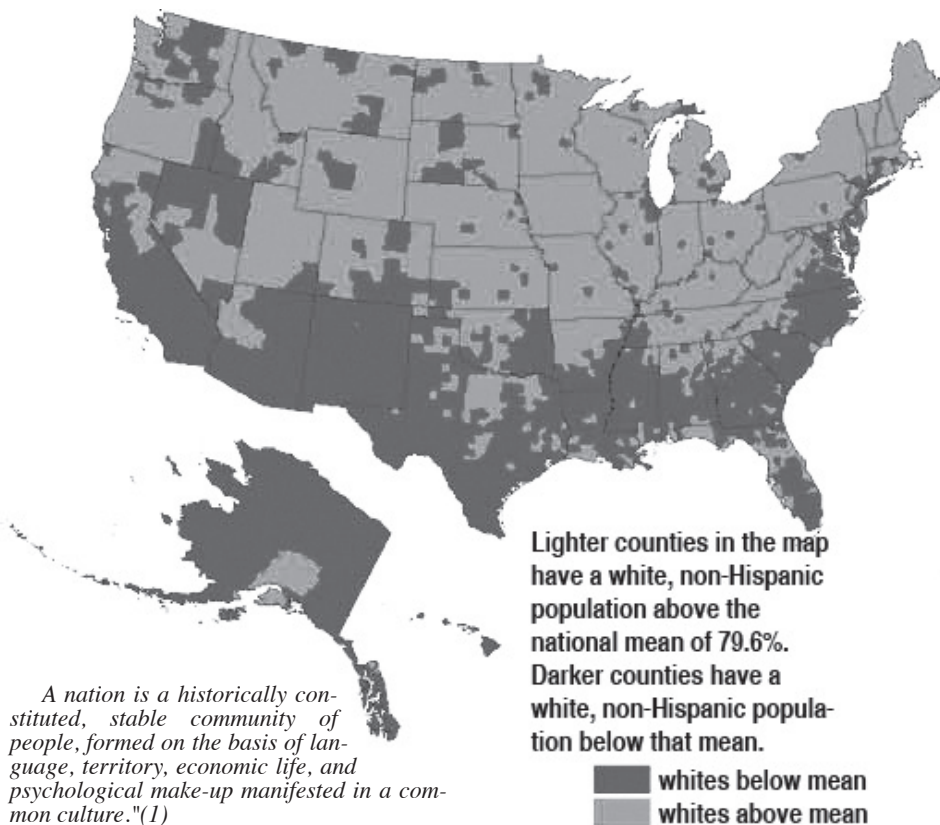
The struggle in the ideological arena is just as vital as that with the rifle, and perhaps more difficult. Out in society -- where people have more social influences -- ideas, experiences and thought can bring more diverse views into the sphere of theory. Often times the prison environment, in its concentrated form and social makeup, has more limited ideological influences. This is a trap that prisoners should guard against in developing a political line. There will always be ideological "yes people" in prisons, especially amongst one's own circle of friends or comrades. This could also be said of the limited contacts in the outside world that most prisoners have.

The "national question" is one that is not exclusive to the Black Nation; it is something that Raza and others are wrangling with as well. My critiques here are related to the national question in the United States in general, and not specific to the Black Belt Thesis (BBT) that Rashid addresses in his article.

In the section titled "The Black Belt Thesis and the New Class Configuration of the New Afrikan Nation," Rashid describes comrade J.V. Stalin on the national question as follows:

The [Black Belt Thesis] was based on comrade J.V. Stalin's analysis of the national question as essentially a peasant question. Unlike the analysis put forward by Lenin, and more fully developed by Mao, Stalin's analysis limited the national question to essentially a peasantry's struggle for the land they labored on geographically defined by their having a common language, history, culture and economic life together. Hence the slogan "Free the Land!" and "Land to the Tiller!"

Just to be clear, J.V. Stalin defined a "nation" as follows:



A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."(1)

This definition continues to stand as what defines a nation today and to deny this is simply a deviation. Comrade Lenin was not alive to see the development of the anti-colonial struggles and thus in his view oppressed nations could not be victorious on their own accord, but Stalin taught us differently. At the same time Stalin also stated that should a people no longer meet any of these criteria of a nation then they are no longer a nation.

In this section, Rashid refers to a "Great Migration" of Blacks out of the rural south and across the United States, which he uses, or seems to use, as justification for not having "need of pursuing a struggle to achieve a New Afrikan nation state, we have achieved the historical results of bourgeois democracy..." Just because a people migrate across the continent does not negate a national territory so long as a large concentration remains in the national territory. For example, if the Mohawk nation continues to reside in the northeast but a significant portion of their population spread out "across America" and become urban dwellers, their nation remains in the Northeast no matter how much they wish to be Oregonians or Alaskans. But what really seemed grating in this section was the last paragraph, which reads:

To complete the liberal democratic revolution and move forward to socialist reconstruction the proletariat must lead the struggle which is stifled by the increasingly anti-democratic, fascist and reactionary bourgeoisie. The bourgeois are no longer capable of playing a progressive role in history.

First, the proletariat in its original sense for

the most part does not exist in the United States. In addition, the Trotskyite approach of relying on the Amerikan "working class" is a waste of time. Amerikan workers are not a revolutionary vehicle - they are not exploited when they are amongst the highest paid workers in the world. How can those seeking higher pay for more or bigger plasma TVs and SUVs be relied upon to give all that up for "socialist construction"? And my view does not come unsupported by the ideological framework that Rashid claims to represent. Engels wrote to Marx in 1858:

The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.(2)

So even back in Marx and Engels's day the English proletariat was already bourgeoisified. Imperialism has developed far more since 1858, further concentrating the wealth disparity between the oppressor and oppressed nations globally.

In the section titled "The Revolutionary Advantages of Our Proletarian National Character," the idea is put forth of "building a multi-ethnic, multi-racial socialist America." Although I am not opposed to multi-ethnic organizing, I also don't negate the usefulness of single-nation parties. One has to analyze the concrete conditions in the United States. The historical development

Continued on next page..

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...Rashid Crit

of the social forces may not agree with this approach, and just because it may have worked in some countries it may not apply to this country. It obviously didn't apply to South Africa, another settler state. In Azania the Pan Africanist Congress seemed to forward the struggle more than other groups, in particular the integrationist African National Congress that took power and changed little for Azanians. Huey Newton himself understood this, thus the Black Panther Party was a single nationality party, with internationalist politics. Of course, at some point things will change, but the advancement of imperialism and a long lineage of white supremacy and privilege remains a hurdle still too huge for real multi-ethnic organizing advancements at this time in the United States.

In the section "Separation, Integration or Revolution," what is put forward for liberation is to overthrow "imperialism and play a leading role in the global proletarian revolution and socialist reconstruction." This, Rashid states, is "our path to liberation." This smacks of First World chauvinism. The International Communist Movement (ICM) will always be led by the Third World proletariat. The ICM is dominated by the Third World and our voice in the First World is just that, a voice, that will help advance the global struggle, not lead. The idea of First World leadership of the ICM is classic Trotskyism.

In the section "Reassessing the National Liberation Question," in speaking of past national liberation struggles, Rashid points to them having an "unattainable" goal. Yet countries like Vietnam, northern Korea, as well as Cuba come to mind as being successful in their national liberation struggles. [China is the prime example of liberating itself from imperialism and capitalism through socialist revolution. Of course, Huey Newton himself eventually dismissed China's achieving of true national liberation in his theory of "intercommunalism" that the NABPP-PC upholds. - Editor]

Rashid goes on to say, "Even if we did man-

age to reconstitute ourselves as a territorial nation in the "Black Belt," we would only join the ranks of imperialist dominated Third World nations -- and with the imperialist U.S. right on our border." Here it seems the idealist proposition is being put forward that an oppressed nation could possibly liberate itself to the point of secession while U.S. imperialism is still breathing. So long as U.S. imperialism is still in power, no internal oppressed nation will emancipate itself. So the thought of the imperialists being on one's border will not be a problem as at that point in the struggle for national liberation imperialism will be on no one's border.

In this same section, Rashid quotes Amilcar Cabral, who posed the question of whether national liberation was an imperialist creation in many African countries. Now we should understand that the imperialists will use any country, ideology or leader if allowed (Ghadaffi found this out the hard way most recently) but we should not believe that the people are not smart enough to free themselves when oppressed. The white supremacists put forward a line that Jews are in an international conspiracy creating revolution and communism. These conspiracy theorists look for any reason to suggest that the people cannot come to the conclusion to decolonize themselves.

Later in this section the question is asked if the "proponents of the BBT expect whites in the 'Black Belt' to passively concede the territory and leave?"

I'm not a proponent of the Black Belt Thesis, but speaking in regard to national liberation I can answer this question quite clearly. As this writer alludes to, there may be a "white backlash." But in any national liberation struggle anywhere on the planet there is always a backlash from those whose interests are threatened. When the oppressed nations decide to liberate themselves in the United States the objective position of the reactionaries will be to fight to uphold their white privilege. This privilege relies heavily on the state and the culture of white supremacy in Amerika. So their choice will be to support the

national liberation struggles, as real white revolutionaries will do, or to side with imperialism. But there will be no sympathy for oppressors in any national liberation struggle.

Asking the question of what do we expect whites to do is akin to asking the revolutionary post-Civil War, when many were cut off from parasitism, "well do you expect the people to stop exploiting 'their' field workers?" Do you expect Amerikan workers to stop being paid high wages gained through the exploitation of the Third World? Do you expect the pimp to stop pimping the prostitute? Do you expect the oppressor nation to give up their national privilege? To all of the above I say if it's what the people decide, then YES!

Real white comrades not only will support the oppressed to obtain liberation in a future revolution, but most do so in their work today, even though they are a small minority compared to the larger Amerikan population. By that time in the distant future hopefully more people will have been educated and converted.

It is the task of conscious prisoners to develop a political line that propels the imprisoned masses forward via concrete analysis, not just of prison conditions, but of conditions outside these concentration camps as well. Oppression in imperialism is a three-legged stool that includes class, nation and gender. Thus we must develop our political line according to these concrete conditions. Our line should be grounded in reality. Our society is still very much segregated along class and national lines, particularly in the fields of housing, education and freedom.

Indeed, over half the people living within two miles of a hazardous waste facility are Brown, Black or First Nations.(3) In many high schools in the inner city Brown and Black youth are forced to share one textbook for 3 or 4 students, while their parents are *jailed* when they attempt to enroll their children in "better off" schools which unsurprisingly are predominantly white.(4) The prisons are no different, nor the "justice system." Of the 700,000 who were reported to have been stopped and frisked in New York City last year, 87% were Latinos and Blacks even though whites make up 44% of New York City's population.

When we develop a political line we must challenge it on a materialist foundation in order to sharpen things up in a positive way, but it must not be detached from reality. Only in this way will we identify what is palpable in the realm of national liberation.

As Lenin said, "it is fine, it is necessary and important, to dream of another or radically different and better world -- while at the same time we must infuse and inform our dreams with the most consistent, systematic and comprehensive scientific outlook and method, communism, and on that basis fight to bring those dreams into reality."

MIM(Prisons) adds: The original article by

Continued on page 8...

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.

Review: Amerikkkan Prisons on Trial – Guilty!

by USW C-4 of United Struggle from Within
May 2012

It's not for nothing that MIM dubbed the Amerikkkan prison system "the primary tool of oppressor nation repression in the united State\$," and a review of *MIM Theory 11: Amerikkkan Prisons On Trial* makes this point ever so clear. Though this particular *MIM Theory (MT)* journal came out in 1996, like all *MTs* its message is not. It still serves as a good introduction to the Amerikan injustice system just as Lenin's *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* continues to serve as an introductory foundation in political economy for those wanting to study the thinly veiled intricacies of modern-day imperialism. One read and you'll see why Amerika, that "shining city on a hill," is in all actuality the prisonhouse of nations.

MIM Theory 11 is a must read, not just for the political and class-conscious prisoner, but for all prisoners as a stepping stone on the road to liberation and sure footing to understanding the exact context of our imprisonment.

Beginning with the essay "Amerikan Fascism & Prisons," MIM lays out the only real fascist aspect in Amerikan society - the Amerikan prison system. This work is indeed of exceptional relevance as MIM points to the economic motivation behind fascism as well as to the white petit-bourgeois element that breathes life into this most barbaric expression of capitalist production and its anti-revolutionary mission statement.

The article "Capital & State Join Hands in Private Prisons" further elaborates on the thesis that fascism is not just alive and well within the Amerikkkan prison system, but that it has been expanding since the 1980s in the private prison phenomenon, which is but the melding of capital and the state in the growing war against the oppressed nations, with the prerequisite and additional benefit of continuing to win over the middle classes to their side by ensuring them an always available form of employment.

"Prison Labor: Profits, Slavery & the State" then explains how the possibility of open slavery can come back full force thru the institution of the prisons as it was once manifested pre-Civil War. This article also speaks of the important political functions the prison system serves in repressing the national liberation movements and the further indoctrination of the labor aristocracy with fascist ideology.

Nothing however drives home the colonial relation between Amerika and the oppressed nations like the articles "Political Prisoners Revisited," "Political Prisoners & the Anti-Imperialist Struggle" and "Who Are the Political Prisoners?"

"Political Prisoners Revisited" is a good example of the Maoist tenet of unity-criticism-unity in which MIM explains the basics of their line concerning prisoners in Amerika in a dialogue

with the New Afrikan Independence Movement. MIM argues that the term "political prisoners" shouldn't just be reserved for individuals such as Mumia Abu-Jamal or Leonard Peltier, but is more appropriately and powerfully applied to all prisoners. All prisoners currently incarcerated under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie are rightly so political prisoners because the "laws" that we supposedly broke were laws specifically designed for the backing of the backward illegitimate political agenda of the superstructure and the settler state which it serves. To ignore or refute this point with respect to the entire imprisoned population and instead deflect the political aspect of this oppression to just a few individuals is not just a victory for the bourgeoisie but is itself bourgeois in essence!

"Political Prisoners & the Anti-Imperialist Struggle" centers on the antagonistic contradiction of Amerika vs. the oppressed nations that is reflected thru the prison system. It focuses on the material basis objectively present in the form of the gulag, and the material forces already present therein. MIM discusses the dire need for leadership to further help develop these potentially revolutionary forces to their logical conclusion or in MIM's words: "to unite all who can be united to smash imperialism and all its tools of oppression..."

MIM understood the process of rapid radicalization of "common criminals" as a profoundly political one and in their agitation they emphasized that process as reflecting the material basis for revolution as does MIM(Prisons) and USW. Unity on this point is therefore essential to re-launching the new prison movement in connection with the national liberation struggles which have been repressed and stagnated by the oppressors with mass incarceration.

Finally, "Who Are the Political Prisoners?" is a New York prisoner's contribution and advancement to the MIM line on political prisoners in which s/he expounds MIM's line in detail and in such a way as to leave no doubt that the growth of the prison system within U.\$ borders is not just a boil, but a cancer on the oppressed nation internal semi-colonies that needs to be mercilessly removed!

MT 11 also contains, among other things, an essay on Malcolm X's progressive development, a critique of Gandhi's so-called "non-violence" and pacifist strategy and tactics, as well as some good theoretical works and revolutionary poetry.

For all these reasons combined, *MIM Theory 11: Amerikkkan Prisons on Trial* gets four out of four red stars. And so with that I end this review the same way the New York prisoner ended his article:

Death and Destruction to the U.\$ Empire!

Birth and Construction to the Prison Revolutionary Movement! ★

The Problem of White Supremacist Lumpen Organizations

by an Oregon prisoner
January 2012

Most of us have lost our old world ways in Amerika's miracle whip consumer culture. For white people this is particularly true. Our grandparents or great-grandparents came to Amerika and abandoned their ancestral old world customs. Most did so in the belief they had to leave behind the old ways in order to succeed in Amerika. They kept old world customs and mythology -- essentially their native cultural practices -- away from their children. Old cultures were forgotten for imperialist, capitalist greed.

Eventually we all search for identity. Unfortunately all too often when our white youth seek identity, they find it in the false belief of their supremacy in the color of their skin. This is because the white imperialist elite actively epush this notion. Often whites seeking identity come from the lumpen class. The lower classes of all peoples tend to want to seek an identity because they are disenfranchised from the upper classes who are ignorantly content to unquestioningly follow the U.\$ consumer culture.

Because we have not taught our white youth about being proud of their ancestral cultural heritage, white supremacist and separatist groups are quick to jump in and teach them the only thing they have to be proud of is the color of their skin and the false notion of supremacy that comes from living in a society controlled by a white imperialist elite.

As responsible citizens of the world, if we were to teach our white youth the value of their ancestral cultural heritage, it is my experience that we teach them to value other peoples' cultures as well. This would alleviate white cultural envy, which in my experience is one of the driving factors that leads young whites on a search for identity. If we responsible and sensible members of the world recognize this and teach our white youth the value of their native culture and the value of other peoples' native cultures before the white imperialist elite can turn them into foot soldiers fighting blindly for their cause, then we can begin the steps of destroying the false notion of white supremacy.

If we are going to be successful revolutionary comrades in our fight against this oppressive system, especially our prisons, we all need to unite peoples from all ethnic backgrounds. We all have native cultural practices to be proud of, and that includes whites. Though re-educating those who believe in their supremacy or in separatism may be difficult, it is essential that it happens and that we attempt the process with care and compassion, not threats of violence.

As a former racist skinhead I know what I've written to be true. I had to re-educate myself. On the outside, I formed an organization whose goal was to combat hatred using peaceful non-violent tactics. I have worked with dozens of racist skinheads, helping to re-educate them,

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More Targeting of Latinos for Validation

by a California prisoner
February 2012

I recently came across your newsletter and found it very interesting. I am in Ironwood State Prison - Administrative Segregation (ISP Ad-Seg). All should be advised that Hispanic prisoners are being targeted by Institutional Gang Investigations (IGI) in ISP for validation. Many of us were told to either inform or be validated. Myself and many others are validated on informants alone, and some on cultural drawings alone. It seems the state's agents (Office of Correctional Safety) are rubber-stamping anything submitted by ISP-IGI.

MIM(Prisons) responds: Gang validation is just one of many tactics used by the prisons to divide prisoners and target activists. The threat to inform or be validated is common, and then false information is used to validate those political activists that the prison wants to isolate. This is another example of why MIM(Prisons) says that prison classifications do not define a prisoner's revolutionary potential. Many informants walk in GP freely without anyone knowing what they did while solid activists are falsely validated or retreat to SNY. We must judge our comrades by their actions, not their prison-imposed classification. ★

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...Texas

ministrative segregation prisoner for a weapon planted in my cell by one of these racist officers. They have done cell searches to steal my legal documents, destroy my property, defile my religious books and prayer rug, and leave obscene drawings of monkeys or apes being hung or impaled with a KKK cross. They have been doing this to the New Afrikaners here for a while and are getting more and more violent and vindictive.

As a political prisoner, I've been targeted not only because of my ebony hue, but for my constant struggle to enlighten these slave mentality prisoners to unite and take a stand. I've been told by Sergeant Mondragon and Correctional Officer Ruiz that they will make sure I die in this cell. Captain Boland, Major Hardegree, Lieutenant Hancock and Warden John Adams have created this kind of fractal injustice as there is not one New Afrikan officer/employee on 2-Card/1st Shift High Security.

This is only the second day of my hunger strike. I wish for your support and solidarity to keep me strong and vigilant. I can only hope to force a change and get outside recognition to the abuse and hate crimes committed by these racist gangs in the guise of correctional officers.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We stand behind this comrade's fight against racist injustice. But we don't fight to add more Black officers in the prison. We know oppressed nation pigs are still pigs. This kind of integration is not progressive.

We encourage our comrades to explore all

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...White LOs

and have witnessed drastic transformations creating informed and educated revolutionary comrades. I continue my work from my prison cell. Drugs and robberies may have taken me out of society, but I have found ways to keep my eye on the prize even while incarcerated. The goal to unify us all is too great to be forsaken.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We share this comrade's goal to eliminate white supremacy, and we agree that it is often the poorest whites who end up taking up these fascist positions. But this writer misses a key reason behind this drive to racism for poor whites: the economic system of imperialism has created a parasitic labor aristocracy out of the white nation within imperialist borders. This labor aristocracy rallies around the ideology of social democracy, which for some manifests as overt white supremacy. Those on the economic bottom of this labor aristocracy are most easily turned against the oppressed nations with racism.

Even as prisoners, whites have typically developed close ties to their "brothers" who run the prisons that hold them. That said, we organize the imprisoned lumpen as a class, and work to unite with as many white prisoners as we can around resisting the oppression of prisoners.

While there is some interesting and important cultural history among whites in Amerika, who came from a variety of European countries, the overwhelming cultural history is colonialist and not something to celebrate. The invasion of this country, massacre of indigenous people, enslavement of oppressed nations, and plunder of the world is the unfortunate legacy of the white nation. We don't want to encourage white youth to embrace this history and culture, rather we want to help them reject this reactionary legacy and take up work on the side of the majority of the world's people. We study the past to understand the world, to transform the present, and to determine the future. ★

non-violent methods of struggle, including hunger strikes when necessary. But these actions should not be taken without building necessary support for success. Even in California where thousands of prisoners joined the hunger strike, the victory has resulted in few immediate changes, while at least one comrade died in that struggle. These movements require careful planning by an organized leadership and time spent building mass support. ★

...Continued from page 6

...Rashid Crit

Rashid is in response to the New Afrikan Maoist Party and cites the Maoist Internationalist Movement as another party promoting the Black Belt Thesis. While MIM certainly never denounced the Black Belt Thesis, they recognized the crumbling material basis for seeing it through in the post-Comintern years that Rashid points to in his article. It is worth noting that more recent statistics show the New Afrikan population since 1990 has increased most in the South, where 55% of New Afrikaners live today and that in the Black Belt states a much higher percentage of the population is New Afrikan than in the rest of the country.(5) MIM did publish an interesting discussion of the land question for New Afrika as an example of a two line struggle in 2004. Ultimately the land question must be determined by two conditions which we do not currently have: 1) a Black nation that has liberated itself from imperialism, and 2) a forum for negotiating land division in North America with other internal semi-colonies free from imperialist intervention.

In his article, Rashid responds to our critique of his liquidating the nationalist struggle in the book *Defying the Tomb*. In doing so he speaks of a Pan-Afrikan Nation, which is an oxymoron completely liquidating the meaning of both terms. Pan-Afrikanism is a recognition of the common interests of the various oppressed nations of Africa, often extended to the African diaspora. You cannot apply the Stalin quote given above to New Afrika and Pan Afrikanism and consistently call both a nation.

But ultimately, as the USW comrade criticizes above, the liquidationism is strongest in the NABPP-PC line on the progressive nature of the American nation. It is this dividing line that makes it impossible for our camps to see eye-to-eye and carry out a real two line struggle on the question of New Afrikan land. ★

Notes:

1. JV Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, 1913 in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, Proletarian Publishers: San Francisco, p. 22. Available from MIM Distributors for \$7.
2. VI Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, John Riddell ed., *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, Monad Press: New York, 1984, p.498.
3. Rebekah Cowell, "In Their Backyard", *The Sun* May 2012.
4. CNN January 26 2011 "Mom jailed for enrolling kids in wrong school district"
5. <http://www.blackdemographics.com/population.html>

FREE POLITICAL BOOKS

Under Lock & Key is free to all prisoners. MIM(Prisons) also runs a Books for Prisoners Program through which we mail prisoners political theory and history books and magazines in exchange for political work. Prisoners requesting books need to tell us what work you want to do, or just send in the articles, artwork, poetry, report on a study group you formed, etc. For many prisoners, the easiest way to start is by becoming a ULK Field Correspondent (see page 12).

Our Books for Prisoners Program relies on donations of books and money. If you have any contacts on the outside who can donate to our program, or who can hook us up with dictionaries, Mao or Lenin, or other political books, please tell them to contact us at the address on page 1. When requesting books it is best to ask for general topic areas and let us send you whatever we have on hand.

Understanding the Coup in Mali

by Antonio Moreno

April 2012

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The recent coup in the west African country of Mali continues to play out. On March 21st 2012 a rebel faction of the nation's military took over the elected government over internal disputes in the region. The military faction, naming itself the Committee for the Reestablishment of Democracy and the Restoration of the State, took control of the government, suspended the constitution, and seized television and radio stations. On April 8th president Amadou Toumani Toure, who quickly fled the country days before, officially resigned.⁽¹⁾ After condemnation from ECOWAS, the regional economic bloc, and crippling sanctions by Western powers, an interim government was put in place, with the military given prominent roles.

The given reasons for the coup were based around the rebellion of ethnic Tuareg groups in the north of the country. The military said that the government was not adequately supporting them in quelling the rebellion. Discontent had spread throughout the country earlier, such as in February 2012 with protests in Bamako, the nation's capital, with barricades set up and tires burned.

The Tuaregs have taken advantage of the crisis and recently declared independence.⁽²⁾

The present crisis is tied to a long history of colonialism and neocolonialism. It is also a result of blowback from the recent overthrow of Gaddafi in Libya. The U.S. has been heavily involved in Mali lately, and further imperialist encroachment by the U.S. and France is very likely.

History of Mali, from colonialism to neocolonialism

Mali has long been encroached by western colonialism. It was colonized by France in the 19th century, and was once part of French Sudan. It met with resistance from Muslim empires during that time, [in] which the Tuaregs heavily participated. Mali became independent in 1960, first as the short-lived Mali Federation with Senegal, and then as the Republic of Mali, and subsequently withdrew fully from the French Community that governed French colonies. The first president, Modibo Keita, was a socialist and pan-Africanist who had ties to Nkrumah and Sekou Toure of Guinea, and helped draft the charter of the Organization of African Unity.

The ruling party proclaimed its policies as "decolonization and the setting-up of structures of a socialist type." Anti-imperialist scholar Samir Amin noted that Mali was very underdeveloped at the time of its independence, affecting its economic independence and creating a neocolonial situation that came in contradiction to its socialist ideals:

"The absence of any effective organization which would have allowed the masses some control over the state structures inevitably resulted in the total disorganization of the economic system, leading to a constant search for foreign aid under the pressure of an increasing foreign payments deficit, and finally to the capitulation and eventual overthrow of the regime."⁽³⁾

Due to problems of establishing independent economic development the socialist goals of independence floundered, and a coup against Modibo Keita by the military happened in 1968.

The Tuareg Struggle and Libya

The Tuaregs are a Berber nomadic people that have long resided in the Saharan regions of West Africa. They gave fierce resistance to the European colonizers, having rebelled five different times since 1916. The supposed post-colonial era carved up their homeland into different nation-states that the people of Africa had no say in forming. Today they reside mainly in northern Mali and in the border regions of four other countries nearby, and have long been discriminated [against] by the central governments of these nation states.

The ethnic Tuareg groups have been fighting a recent rebellion since January 2001. They have consolidated under the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (NMLA), named after what they call their traditional homeland. After they have seized at least three towns in the north of Mali, they stated they have no plans to attack the capitol in the south, simply wanting national independence.

The recent conflict the Tuaregs have waged is related to the recent U.S. – NATO backed war against Libya and Gaddafi, whom the Tuaregs have had long relationships with. Many Tuaregs have served in the Libyan army, others came to the country as migrant workers. After the puppet Transitional National Council took over the country and murdered Gaddafi, thousands of Tuareg soldiers returned to their homes, many in Mali. The former soldiers came back with weaponry they used, and gave their training to others in the fight in the homeland.

U.S. Involvement

The turmoil of the recent coup and the connections of its participants points to increasing western imperialist encroachment into the affairs of Mali, especially by the United States and France.

The coup leader, Capt. Amadou Samoga, was previously trained in the U.S. through the

Continued on next page...

Retaliation for Hunger Strike and New Protest Ideas

by a California prisoner

March 2012

Corcoran prison officials have been retaliating and harassing the prisoners. They started feeding us on small paper trays, leaving us in our cells for days without exercise yard, and openly telling us it's because of people going on hunger strike.

Institution Gang Investigations (IGI) has been harassing everybody, even me. They came and took everything out of my living cell claiming that I am a suspected BGF member. That's crazy! I'm not from any gang at all. Corcoran prison officials got me going back to court facing 10 years to life. They wrote up several false reports on me stating I assaulted staff and the Hanford County DA picked up all the cases.

They are retaliating and punishing everybody. And get this: the prisoners are running scared. They stopped filing complaints against the police, saying: "I don't want IGI fucking with me." Man! It hurts bad to see my own comrades laying down and giving up.

I have been really pushing hard to shut down the Security Housing Units. I have been telling everybody to stop taking a cellmate. Can you imagine the panic that will come over head officials if everybody with a cellmate said no, I'm not taking a cellie. Imagine that. Then ask yourselves should we push for another hunger strike and hurt our health and become too weak to fight these pigs? Or should we push for a big movement to stop all comrades from taking a cellmate? I'll give these pigs 30 days and they will shit on themselves and give up whatever we demand.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We know that the California prisons have been retaliating against prisoners who participated in the recent hunger strikes, and this comrade raises a good point in pushing forward the discussion about best tactics for next steps. ★



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...Mali

International Military Education and Training program, IMET. (4) He attended an English language instructor course in Texas from 2004 to 2005, and later again in 2007. In 2008 he attended intelligence training in Arizona. In 2010 he attended infantry officer training in Georgia and Quantico, Virginia, and also attended a counter-terrorism conference in Georgia too. (5) (6)

The U.S. through AFRICOM has been steadily encroaching itself into West Africa, including Mali. The U.S., along with France, has in the past decade given substantial aid to Mali to purportedly fight Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Mainstream media has reported that some Tuaregs fighting not only want national liberation but to establish Sharia law. With terrorism used as an excuse for expansion of empire, these reports should be scrutinized. Mali has participated in the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership, as well as Atlas Accord 12. The United States has given \$138 million in assistance to Mali.

The coup has left an already unstable country even more [u]nstable. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled their homes, many crossing over to neighboring countries. With West Africa one of the poorest regions in the world, the humanitarian crisis is likely to be severe. As with many crises, the masses will be the ones that suffer. Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world, and has one of the world's highest infant mortality rates. This even though it is the 3rd highest gold producer in Africa, along with many other natural resources. Imperialists are likely to use this instability to get further control over these resources.

During the era of independence the idea of pan-Africanism was spread, intended to unite the continent to truly be free of imperialism and colonialism. Today with imperialism continually expanding in every area of Africa, it is necessary for the African peoples to build unity to resist. The coup in Mali is a result of imperialist blowback from their intervention in Libya. And the imperialists will take advantage of this situation in Mali, to the detriment of their people. The African continent is made up of many different peoples who have and are continuing to fight for their national existence. These struggles must be supported, while also campaigning for common struggles against the principal enemy, western imperialism. Once it is defeated the African people can build development for the benefit of their own people, not the parasitic West. ★

Sources:

1. USA Today, April 8 2012
2. Washington Post, April 6 2012
3. Amin, Samir. *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa*. 1973. Monthly Review Press. pp. 228-229.
4. McClatchy, March 23 2012
5. Sergio Daniel, AFP, March 25 2012
6. NPR March 29 2012

Trayvon Martin Murder One More Case of Imperialist Oppression

by cipactli of United Struggle from Within
April 2012

A clenched fist goes up for the New Afrikan youth Trayvon Martin who was murdered in Sanford, Florida on February 26 2012.

Here we are in this endless cycle of genocide inflicted on the internal semi-colonies. Hunting season is never over in Amerika; it is merely covered up with different words to describe it. But those of us in prisons across Amerikkka understand what is taking place.

It has taken almost two full months for the arrest of George Zimmerman to be finally carried out. That's sad, when a Black 17-year-old is executed in cold blood and the killer is allowed to roam free, but we are arrested for reckless driving and given a life sentence. U.S. soldiers slaughter villages, cut off ears, take photos of themselves urinating on the bodies, without being charged; and when they are charged they walk free. Migrants are shot and killed by white supremacist militia groups, and not only does the corporate media not report it, but bills are currently being pushed through that call for militia groups to formally work in concert with border patrol.

The truth is the state operates in a way that allows many loopholes and leeway for white supremacists to survive and continue their terror. This is seen in the treatment these groups are given from Amerika. If you look closely at this phenomenon it shows us what kind of a rotten system we really live under. The problem is we have been born and raised in this imbalanced existence so we now believe many things are "normal" or "okay" when in fact they are very wrong.

Case in point: the existence of white supremacist militia groups. If we were to have a handful of Chicanos with guns in any house we would be labeled "gang members" and the SWAT team would come in and crush our ex-

istence. If a handful of New Afrikans were at a house with guns and a flagpole flying their banner, they would be labeled terrorists and crushed. Yet there are entire compounds of white supremacists with guns and websites proclaiming their objectives, and for the most part Amerika leaves them untouched. Why is this? Well because these neo-Nazi or other white supremacists actually complement the imperialists' agenda here in Amerika in many ways.

In one way they help to keep the mass attention off the state itself, but they also make room for the state to step in and appear as some savior. As in the Trayvon Martin murder, they allow this vigilante psychotic maggot to run amok, allowing the people's anger to boil, and then step in to arrest him. This way many will think "they did the right thing" or "the law works."

These tired old bait-and-switch tactics don't fool nobody. We know Amerika *is* Zimmerman! Zimmerman is only a physical manifestation of imperialism. Imperialism, like Zimmerman, travels the world stalking Third World nations and then attacking the oppressed nation, latching on and sucking the blood, the resources, leaving a lifeless corpse in its place. They can call Amerika a "colorblind" society; they can allow the public to be "intermingled"; they can nominate Obama as president; but any way you slice it there is no justice to be found here for Brown or Black folks. Our justice will only come from our own hands through struggle.

Racism is generally understood by revolutionaries first and foremost as an outgrowth of the ruling class, which nurtures these white supremacists into fascist foot soldiers. They are imperialism's reserve army and are intertwined with the state apparatus. They have a mutual interest in keeping things "the way they are."

The most we've gotten out of Obama concerning this modern day lynching was him saying "if I had a son he would look like Trayvon." Really? He couldn't even make a speech denouncing the attack on Black people, the problem of white supremacy, or the new caste-like system that encourages these modern day lynchings lest he offend the oppressor nation. But saying nothing at all would offend the Black nation. His "middle ground" was "if I had a son he would look like Trayvon."

These bourgeois politicians serve the ruling class, they serve capital, they serve Wall Street. Our justice may not come tomorrow but it will surely come, and until then let us prepare the people for the cold reality in Amerika. ★



2012 NDAA: Fascism Obama-style

by 1st Crown of Black Order Revolutionary Organization
March 2012

Attention oppressed nation citizens and anti-imperialists: the first "Black" president of the United \$nakes, Barack Obama, has signed into law one of the most fascistic pieces of legislation ever in the history of this country: the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The NDAA has many statutes within it, but here's the gist of the act: It allows the Pentagon/military of the U.\$ to determine who is or could be a "terrorist" or an "enemy combatant." It allows those so deemed to be detained in prison indefinitely without a trial and to be kept under its complete jurisdiction. It makes no difference whether the said persyn/group(s) are U.\$ citizens or "firing" enemies, and the entire U.\$ is now considered a field of combat.

With the enactment of the NDAA, military law and courts supersede the civilian judicial system over those persyns being held for violations under NDAA. So by defining the entire country as a field of combat, all the Pentagon has to do to exercise its organized force is to get the standing President to give his okay.

The reality is that the so-called "Supreme Law" of the land, the U.\$ constitution, is null and void in these cases and all of its so-called "protections," i.e. to no cruel and unusual punishment (torture, etc), due process, and so on, are denied. The implications of the NDAA are far-reaching for anti-imperialists involved in struggles for national liberation and independence of oppressed nations inside of U.\$ borders and beyond.

Hatred from ADC and Grievance Campaign Update

by an Arizona prisoner
April 2012

The grievance campaign is very well alive out here in Arizona. As a litigious prisoner of war, isolated behind closed doors, I am doing my part in disseminating the grievance campaign where I feel it can have its most impact. I have also imported its meaning into an actual grievance alleging a denial of my First Amendment rights and access to courts. If Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) does not follow through and respond to my grievances within their specified time frames, I anticipate filing a lawsuit. I am also seeking injunction relief, asking the court and ADC to consider how its grievances are handled when being delivered to prisoners. This is because I believe they should be handled confidentially due to the legal issues that are presented in these grievances.

Your most recent letter including an Unconfirmed Mail Form and letter to Director Charles L. Ryan, et al. regarding censorship was given to me yesterday [3 April 2012] with "please pick

There are a few key facts revolutionary nationalists and communists must keep in mind: 1) a united front against imperialism, led by the international proletariat, will be necessary to defeat the imperialists; 2) bourgeois electoral politics are a political sham; 3) there is no such thing in Amerika as "freedom of speech," so watch what you say; 4) independent institutions of the oppressed are a must if we are to meet our needs; and 5) nothing short of a socialist revolution will solve the problems facing poor and oppressed nations.

Reminder: there are no rights, only power struggles!

MIM(Prisons) adds: There is a reason why we don't call the U.\$ a fascist country, even though fascism is enforced by U.\$ imperialism in parts of the Third World and even against some sectors of the internal semi-colonies where the NDAA is nothing new or surprising. A key fact we might add to the list above of things to keep in mind is that the majority of Amerikans support the system that has awarded them so much privilege compared to most people in the world. This popular support and stability at home is why fascism has not yet been instituted inside U.\$ borders. What laws like the NDAA indicate is that the imperialists are prepared to lead the way in a fascist direction.

Many throw the word "fascist" around thanks to Amerikan ahistorical thinking that uses "fascist" as an insult for anything it disagrees with. We uphold Dimitrov's line that fascism is "the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capital." It is not simply brutal repression, which is carried out by political powers of many sorts. For more on the scientific definition of fascism get MIM(Prisons)'s Fascism Study Pack available for \$2. ★

up your idiot form from you CO III" written on it. In addition, a cigarette hole was burned through the letter. This type of misconduct is extremely unprofessional, especially coming from a government entity claiming rehabilitation, justice, standards, and professionalism.

Unfortunately this type of unprofessional behavior seems to be an ongoing pattern of harassment against MIM(Prisons). I am requesting that an incident report be documented in this case, and that ADC conduct an internal investigation. Furthermore, I'm asking that they ensure that I am no longer harassed in the form of tampering with my mail, which is a Federal offense.

I am sending this envelope to the ACLU who is now representing me and several other prisoners in a class action lawsuit against ADC Director Charles L. Ryan as the Defendant. We are alleging inadequate medical and mental health services, which are unconstitutional conditions of confinement. I am hoping they can see the hatred that is rained upon us at the hands of this

TN Prisoners Organize to Prevent Privatization and Further Degradation

by a Tennessee prisoner
April 2012

When Republican Bill Haslam was elected Governor of the State of Tennessee, he appointed Derrick D. Schofield as Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC). I assume the "D" in Schofield's middle name stands for either dumbass or dickhead, because since then the conditions in prison have deteriorated. Schofield is one of the \$nakes that was instrumental in causing the largest prison sit-down in United Snakes hystory.

It is no doubt that the Governor brought this individual to cause chaos and mayhem to the captives at all the prisons in Tennessee. They do this in the hopes of enticing the captives to riot so that they can receive federal funds and justify turning the state plantations over to Correctional Corporation of America (CCA). This way they can pad their pockets and implement new legislature that will rob the captives of what little dignity they may have left.

Many of your politicians have stock in CCA as well as political allegiance to their dubious goals. Recently it was revealed that CCA had sent letters to most state governments offering to buy up prisons on the condition that the state contracts with them for at least 20 years, and that the state keeps the prison at a 90% occupancy rate or more. Such a move would further cement the prison industrial complex that profits off humyn suffering while lessening government oversight in how prisoners are treated.

Schofield has attempted to remove all identity and dignity from all captives. His agenda is to persecute instead of rehabilitate the captives. His tactics have been to disregard policies and procedures that have been in place for years and implement unwritten rules. He has caused an atmosphere of hate, discontent and danger for both his employees and the captives.

Wardens have been transferred to different facilities, and it has been stated that Schofield intends to continue transferring Wardens every few years, which may have an adverse impact on institutional stability.

The policy changes that Schofield has implemented have significant consequences. This is not a concern that is only an opinion of the captives. At least four Wardens have resigned or retired since Schofield was appointed commissioner, some due to the implementation of Schofield's new unwritten policies. Also, a number of TDOC staff, from the Warden level down, have contacted the Human Rights Defense Center to express their concerns about the effect Schofield's policy changes have had on both captives and staff in terms of frustration and discontent among prisoners and decreased morale among

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- 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 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH SURVEY

As part of our developing research on the lumpen class in the United States, MIM(Prisons) and USW have created 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 research 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, North Carolina, 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 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. You can 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 can 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.

Wisconsin - Administrators in Wisconsin responded to others' lawsuits and started allowing in our publications as a result. Now people are getting in touch with MIM(Prisons) after years of censorship! This victory shows that fighting censorship can work.

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, and it has been making an impact. Administrators in some facilities have even been properly notifying MIM(Prisons) when our literature is censored. 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.

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...ADC Campaigns

corrupt state. This lawsuit appears to be following the footsteps of *Brown v. Plata*. The ACLU is asking for injunctive relief, asking that all mental health prisoners be taken out of isolation.

I am including some addresses that can be helpful in gathering some momentum in our struggle. They are aware of the prejudice that we're currently experiencing. I'm hoping we can put this together and change Arizona's precedent to violate our First Amendment rights.

MIM(Prisons) adds: Strategically, MIM(Prisons) disagrees with legal battles that do not serve the rights of all prisoners, such as the popular trend of getting "mentally ill" prisoners out of isolation. Doing this further legitimizes the use of torture against those who are mentally strong and are put in isolation for political repression rather than "ill" behavior. There are better ways to reform torture and reduce the number of people in long-term isolation.

In a letter from a staff persyn at Florence Correctional Center in Florence, Arizona, responding to a grievance petition that a prisoner submitted, the staff persyn tells the prisoner to talk to a Correctional Officer about his grievances, when the grievance petition clearly says that this has been tried, doesn't work, and something else needs to be done to protect the prisoners' rights to due process.

So far everyone who has responded directly to the many, many grievance petitions that have been submitted to various prison administrators all over the country have simply referred the petitioners to seek remedy from another entity. No one has taken responsibility for this issue, all the way up the hierarchy. Even when petitioning the United Nations for various humyn rights abuses, U.S. prisoners have been told to seek remedy within the United States "justice" system. We continue to distribute and publicize the campaigns to have grievances properly addressed to further highlight this point. One prisoner has seen some success with a lawsuit in Oklahoma (see page 14).

Clearly justice, due process, and fairness will not be given to us just by making the authorities aware of the problem. Raising public awareness may help apply pressure for reforms to be made. But the most thorough remedy for an end to injustice is to organize against the conditions that allow this to happen. A government designed to protect people and not profits would jump at the opportunity to correct an injustice, especially against its imprisoned population. We know that a society like this is possible, because we've studied how socialism worked under the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong. We encourage everyone frustrated with the Amerikan administrative runaround to work with MIM(Prisons) to build for a better world. ★

Oregon Grievance and Discrimination Remedies

by an Oregon prisoner
April 2012

Grievances are one of the only administrative remedies we have against unjust treatment and staff misconduct. In Oregon we also have discrimination complaints, the right to attempt petition, a department of corrections ombudsman and (any prisoner in any state or federal facility can also do this next step) the ability to file with no fee a Department of Justice (DOJ) civil rights complaint.

In Oregon, grievances come with two appeals. Then you have exhausted the process and can go to further discrimination complaint with one appeal and then that process is exhausted. Using either/or you can lay the groundwork for a federal civil suit and meet the requirements of the 1997 Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) providing you exhaust all administrative remedies available to you. So, you must either exhaust all of your grievance appeals or discrimination complaint appeals to file suit. You may not file a grievance and a discrimination complaint on the same issue. I always advise that you exhaust every grievance and discrimination complaint so you retain your ability to file suit.

You can file a DOJ civil rights complaint at any time with or without exhausting either administrative remedy. However, showing you have tried to address the issue with no satisfaction will help your DOJ complaint. Always create a paperwork trail. Always!

If you are having ongoing issues of some type, but can A) document a new incident of the same type has occurred and B) have new information about the issue, you may file another grievance under OAR 291-019-0140 (6) or another discrimination complaint under OAR 291-

006-0015 (6). However, expect the grievance coordinator will try and stop you claiming you have already filed a grievance/discrimination complaint on the same issue previously. This is one of their tactics to keep you from proving an issue is persistent and is ongoing. This is currently happening to me at Two Rivers Correctional Institution. Ms. Reynolds, the grievance coordinator, is stopping valid grievances and discrimination complaints when I can clearly prove the Oregon administrative rules are being properly followed.

Always know the rules and laws you are evoking. I suggest you read up on them and copy them so you can cite them in your grievance/discrimination complaint process.

If your process is blocked you can take it to the Oregon DOC ombudsman or internal affairs - or both, to keep the issue alive. Make copies of everything you do and make sure you have followed all processes to the letter of rule before you go to this level. As a last resort per OAR 291-107, you can attempt a petition process as well.

You may face uphill battles but if you are going to use the grievance/discrimination complaint process, so do it right the first time and be persistent. You may not win but you can keep the struggle alive.

MIM(Prisons) adds: We don't yet have a petition for Oregon, but for many other states we have petitions prisoners can request to push this grievance battle on the political front while filing administrative appeals and working your way into court. For those states that don't yet have a petition, request the generic version and help us customize it to your state. ★

...Continued from page 11

...Tennessee

employees. None of the TDOC staff members who spoke with Human Rights Defense Center were willing to publicly identify themselves, citing fear of retaliation. The atmosphere here is very vile and becoming extremely dangerous. As is the case in the state of Georgia, the fights, assaults on captives and assaults on staff have gone up significantly, all because of Schofield's silly unwritten rules.

Since the atmosphere here and at all the prisons has become vile, a few of us decided to get together and address our concerns in a petition. We recognize that the oppressor wants for us to riot and that we must first put our struggle out there before we start busting heads.

We got together and put all our concerns down on paper. It was given to a person in each pod to go door-to-door asking individuals to sign. The only ones not asked to sign were known rats. The signatures were then sent out to be copied and we sent copies to many organizations, State Senators, State Representatives,

Turney Center Warden, Commissioner Schofield and Governor Bill Haslam. The petition has also been placed on the internet and Facebook.

If the oppressor does not acknowledge or dialogue with us, we will be forced to conduct a sit-down. The sit-down will consist of all of us refusing to go to work, and refusing to purchase commissary items or use the phone. The oppressor can serve the food and make the beds in the metal plant for the new prison that they have built in Bledsoe County. We want all of the captives held against their will in all the prisons in the State of Tennessee to stand up for themselves, before they are unable to fight for their dignity, identity, freedom and justice.

The captives cannot change their condition until they want to change themselves. Every captive needs to realize who their real enemy is. If anyone wants to help in the cause and has ideas, please contact MIM(Prisons). ★

Note: Kirkham, Chris, Private Prison Corporation Offers Cash in Exchange for State Prisons, Huffington Post, February 14 2012

Oklahoma's Failed Grievance System Challenged in Court

by an Oklahoma prisoner
March 2012

Recently there was a victory for Oklahoma's prisoner population, with respect to the difficulty of having grievances heard and adequately addressed. On February 29 2012, a magistrate judge held that Director Justin Jones "wrongfully established, maintained and enforced the grievance policy and authorized punishment for inmates who show disrespect to staff." The magistrate further held that Director Justin Jones had: "failed to establish an available administrative remedy on the claim involving the policy on grievance restrictions and disregarded the claim against Mr. Jones for the disciplinary policy involving disrespect to staff."

On February 2 2011, the Plaintiff in this case filed a grievance challenging his placement on a grievance restriction. Five days later, the grievance coordinator returned the grievance and checked the box for "Not an issue grievable to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (Private Prisons property, misconduct, see OP-090124, Section 11.B.1.), litigation pending, not within/under."

In response to a complaint made by the Plaintiff, Director Jones argued that he had "failed to exhaust his administrative remedies." Director Jones's argument consisted of the following sentence: "Here the prison's administrative records demonstrate that Plaintiff has not filed any grievance/grievance appeal regarding his being placed on 'Grievance Restriction.'"

Director Jones relied on an affidavit by Debbie Morton, which stated that the Plaintiff had not appealed the February 7 grievance decision to her office. Presumably, the Plaintiff did not appeal the decision because the grievance coordinator has told him that the complaint was not grievable. (1) Even at the time of the magistrate's report and recommendation, Director Jones still did not submit any evidence to suggest that the complaint would have been grievable.

"The plain language of the [Prison Litigation Reform Act] requires that prisoners exhaust only available remedies." *Tuckel v. Grover*, 660 F. 3d 1249, 1252 (10th Cir. 2011) (quoting 42 U.S.C. 1997e(a)). The Oklahoma Department of Corrections's (ODOC's) special report includes excerpts from the grievance policy, but those portions do not identify the matters that are grievable. The magistrate held "thus, Mr. Jones has failed to satisfy his burden of demonstrating an available administrative remedy to contest imposition of a grievance restriction or punishment for disrespect to staff."

The magistrate concluded: "When the Defendant's evidence is reviewed favorably to [the Plaintiff] as required, one can reasonably infer that there was no available administrative remedy to contest his placement on a grievance restriction or the punishment for disrespect to staff. As a result, the court should reject Mr. Jones' argument for dismissal or summary judgement on the basis of exhaustion."

As stated and shown above, my fellow comrades in Oklahoma prisons have no available administrative remedy to contest a grievance restriction or punishment for "disrespect to staff," due to an erroneous establishment of a grievance policy or disciplinary policy. The above outlined lawsuit was filed on March 17 2011 against the Directory of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. If comrades in Oklahoma have been placed on grievance restriction, follow the policy while on that restriction and see to it that the oppressor is dealt with justly.

Further, if comrades are housed at private prisons, know that the ODOC and private companies are in cahoots with each other in an effort to deny you a Constitutional right permitting you to petition the government for a redress of grievances.★

Note: Lyon v. Krol, 305 F. 3d 806, 810 (8th Cir. 2002) (en ban); Bright, J. dissenting) (stating that dismissal for nonexhaustion would have been unwarranted because prison officials may have "creat[ed] the impression that [the prisoner's] claims were not grievable through the [prison] grievance system").

Religious Repression and Retaliation Against Grievances at Lovelock

by SAMAEL
March 2012

Pursuits of justice for religious rights are maliciously being hampered and restricted within the Lovelock Correction Center (LCC) in Lovelock, Nevada. Prisoners fighting religious repression are becoming victims of retaliatory transfers to the maximum security High Desert State Prison; a facility reputed for physical abuse, assaults, and beatings by its staff. High Desert State Prison has been and continues to be a deterrent to and punishment for filing grievances and lawsuits against the misconduct and constitutional violations being perpetrated and committed by LCC staff.

In 2009 six prisoners housed at the LCC were transferred to High Desert State Prison (HDSP) after filing grievances against Lovelock staff for destroying the worship place of their earth-based religious practices.

In 2011 a single individual was also transferred to HDSP for his pursuits against the Nevada Department of Corrections in relation to his Jewish practices and the LCC law library conditions.

Most recently on March 6, 2012 SAMAEL lost a member after he was transferred to HDSP. This prisoner had recently filed suit against several Lovelock CC staff in response to religious discrimination and abuse. Threats of retaliation and actual events of retaliation are an ongoing

Politics

by a Florida prisoner

This game is thick, politics and pale faces
and these dark skin negros, itchin to change places
wantin' to reign supreme, niggas catchin cases
where brothers turn fiend, cause they can't face this
the game ain't told - it's sold for brother souls
my people live in poverty - Mr. Charlie sat on swoll
They wonder why the thugs cry and their hearts turn cold
they got us twisted and deny our votes at the white man's poll
they brought us on boats to add labor to this nation
infest our hood's with dope - now servin's the occupation
Blind us to life by material infatuation
Enslaved to this living, screaming emancipation proclamation
I scream set me free from this land - through my third eye
and see
monkey Tom singing "my country tis of thee"
We steady searching for the land of liberty
The sweet land of jewels that was promised to me
It was a hoax the 40 acres and the mule
With the flow my people gettin played as fools
Time to wisen up, get a grip and use our tools
I know you tired of poverty, being mistreated and abused
We got the knowledge - slave labor built the land
They keep us out of college, so ignorance is their plan
Clearly I see mental freedom wasn't meant for the black man
trapped in society with statues and laws only they can overstand
Dark skin is a sin in this white man's world
My brothers drown their emotions by getting drunk til they hurt
who cares about the early morning fiend twitchin for a fix
the united snakes of american politics

and increasingly recurring tool of intimidation and abuse used by the Lovelock staff as well as at other Nevada institutions. Toleration of such actions must be eliminated and opposition must arise from the ranks of all voices willing to scream justice! Justice! Justice!

SAMAEL speaks out and calls for aid against retaliation. One's voice may be heard, but many will cause revolution! Let your voice join in.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This is another good example of the failure of the grievance systems in American prisons, which pretend to offer prisoners a way to fight for their legal rights and hold prison administrators to their own rules. In reality the grievance process often only serves to identify the "troublemakers" who expect prisons to follow their own policies and are willing to speak out when this is not done. Then grievances can be ignored and prisoners filing them punished for their efforts.

Even though this is how filing grievances plays out in many circumstances, we also know from our own experience that "playing by the rules" occasionally leads to significant improvements, although often temporary, in our ability to organize for our ultimate goals.

While our movement is too weak to take on the oppressors in armed struggle to overthrow the underlying causes of the corrupt grievance systems, we must continue to use legal means of redress to make and keep space for our movement to grow. To get involved, see USW campaign info on page 12.★

Los Estados Unidos Sigue Siendo #1 en las Cifras de Encarcelamiento y la Injusticia Penal

escrito por Soso de MIM(Prisons)
May 2012

En diciembre de 2011, la Oficina de Estadísticas de Justicia dio a conocer sus informes anuales sobre la población penitenciaria en los Estados Unidos.(1) Los informes se refieren a personas mayores de edad bajo la supervisión correccional del año 2010. Por segundo año consecutivo, esta población ha disminuido; este fue el primer descenso desde la década de 1970 cuando el número de presos en la cárcel empezó a crecer significativamente. A finales de diciembre de 2010, el número total de personas en el sistema penitenciario, incluyendo aquellos bajo libertad condicional, y aquellos en la cárcel, fue 7.076.200. La población carcelaria en este país cayó 0.6% a partir de 2009, el primer descenso desde 1972. El número de presos federales en

realidad aumentó un 0.8%, pero la población carcelaria del estado se redujo por la misma tasa. Debido a que hay más presos estatales que presos federales, hubo una caída general en las tasas de encarcelamiento.

Las tasas de encarcelamiento por causa de convicciones penales nuevas han ido disminuyendo desde 2007. No obstante este ha sido el primer año que las cifras de liberaciones han excedido el número de nuevos presos ingresos, lo que mantiene la población carcelaria casi igual. Sin embargo, las tasas de liberación se redujeron un 2.9% en 2010, por lo que estos números no reflejan un aumento en liberaciones. De hecho, el tiempo servido por presos estatales siguió siendo el mismo.

Estas últimas cifras pueden indicar que la

población carcelaria ha llegado finalmente a su punto álgido en América, posiblemente debido a la pesada carga económica de mantener una infraestructura masiva de injusticia criminal en este país. Pero incluso si las tasas de encarcelamiento siguieran disminuyendo, tomará muchos años y contará con cambios enormes antes de que las tasas lleguen a ser lo suficientemente bajas para ser comparables a otros países. Los Estados Unidos tiene más de un 30% de las personas encarceladas en el mundo y tiene la mayor tasa de encarcelamiento en el mundo. (2)

El informe ofrece dos posibles explicaciones para la caída de la población carcelaria en los Estados Unidos: "Ya sea una disminución en la probabilidad de una pena de prisión, o condena dada, o una disminución en el número de condenas." Por desgracia, los datos sobre estas medidas todavía no están disponibles, pero cualquiera de ellos sería una buena cosa para lograr. Sin embargo, como se mencionó anteriormente, es probable que estos cambios sean el resultado de las necesidades financieras y no un cambio en la política en torno a la prisión y el encarcelamiento.

Hay algunas tendencias interesantes que demuestran la nacionalidad por parte de un compromiso continuo con la opresión nacional por el sistema de injusticia criminal en América. Negros y blancos ambos han sentido una caída en las tasas de encarcelamiento, pero la disminución de los blancos (6.2%) fue mucho mayor que aquel de los negros (0.85%). En los últimos años los inmigrantes han sido la población de más rápido crecimiento en las cárceles de los Estados Unidos. Mientras que el 2010 vio un aumento de 7.3% en las tasas de "hispanos" en la cárcel, indocumentados vieron una ligera disminución en sus cifras de encarcelamiento, probablemente debido a un aumento masivo de deportaciones. Los hombres negros siguen componiendo el sector mayor de la población carcelaria y son encarcelados casi 7 veces más que hombres blancos. ★

Notas:

1. *Prisoners in 2010, Correctional Population in the United States, 2010. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Published December 2011.* <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/>
2. *World Prison Population List, Eighth ed. National Institute of Corrections, Published 2009.* <http://nicic.gov/Library/022140>

El MIM(Prisiones)

El Ministro Maoísta Internacional de Prisiones, MIM(Prisiones), es una célula de revolucionarios que sirve las masas oprimidas dentro 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 oprimidas. 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 maoístas 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 oprimidas (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 imperialistas 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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Under Lock & Key No. 26, May/June 2012

Report from Corcoran

by a California prisoner
April 2012

[This followed two statewide food strikes in California in 2011 focused on putting an end to Security Housing Units and improving justice and conditions in CA prisons. While we print some highlights here, this comrade's full story of how the CDCR moved people around and applied political repression via write ups and extended SHU sentences to attack the strikers is available at www.prisoncensorship.info]

When we, the prisoners housed in the Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU1) of CSP-Corcoran, initiated a hunger strike to protest against the inhumane conditions and constitutional violations we faced in the ASU1, the prison officials responded with retaliation and indifference. Their intent was clear: to set an example of what would occur if these protests that had been rocking the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) this past year continued. Their statement was not only meant for the protestors in this ASU1, but for the entire class of oppressed prisoners in the CDCR.

The hunger strike in this ASU1 initially began on 28 December 2011. It was a collective effort with various races and subgroups standing in solidarity for a common interest. A petition was prepared with the issues we wanted to address, and it was submitted to the Corcoran prison officials and also sent out to prisoner rights groups in an attempt to gather support

and attention.

[... Similar to previous strikes, administrators made an offer and asked for 3 weeks to implement changes...] After three weeks passed since the hunger strike was put on hold, it was clear that the prison officials had no intent to honor their word and keep their promises. The hunger strike resumed on 27 January 2012.

The ASU1 Lieutenant, after hearing that we resumed the protest, came to a few protestors and stated the following: "We are tired of you guys, all you guys, doing hunger strikes and asking for all this shit. I am not only speaking for myself, but for my superiors as well. There are correctional officers and staff getting laid off because the state doesn't have money, and you guys in here are asking for more shit? You know what, we don't care if you guys starve yourselves to death. You guys aren't getting shit. The only thing you'll get are incident packets."

[...]

This is where they stand. The oppressors who take away our freedom and liberty continue to fight tooth and nail to deprive us of even our basic human rights. They employ brutal means of retaliation and suppression in an attempt to keep us from exposing the harsh truths of everyday life inside these prison walls. Although the ASU1 hunger strike may have ended, I will continue to have the spirit of resistance. The outcome will not be decided by a single battle but of many, and I will do my part in hopes that my small contribution may make a difference. ★

Under Lock & Key not enough?

If one ULK every 2 months isn't enough political education for you, join a Maoist study cell through MIM(Prisons)! The intro study group is split into 2 levels and studies articles written by MIM(Prisons); a pamphlet on the basics of MIM(Prisons)'s political line; and Mao Zedong's "On Contradiction," which introduces us to the philosophy of dialectical materialism (how we study history).

The whole study course costs \$5, but you can trade work for study if you can't pay. Participants must be able to receive the study materials via mail and respond to each assignment on time. Write in today to sign up for the next group.

Or start your own political study group in your prison. You don't need any fancy books or special knowledge to do this. Start by studying and discussing the content of this issue of ULK. Write to us and let us know what questions came up and we'll get you some more reading materials to help answer those questions.