



January/February 2018, No. 60

Publication of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

MIM(Prisons) On U.S. Prison Economy – 2018 update

by MIM(Prisons)
February 2018

The United States government, and society in general, spend an enormous amount of money on the criminal injustice system. The primary reason behind this expenditure, from the perspective of the government, is social control of oppressed nations within the United States.(see Politics of Mass Incarceration article, this page) But there are other beneficiaries, and losers, in this expensive criminal injustice system. In this article we will look at where the money comes from; who is benefiting and who is paying; and how these economic interests play into our strategy to organize against the criminal injustice system.

This is a follow-up to "MIM(Prisons) on U.S. Prison Economy" written in 2009. By periodically looking at these economic facts and trends we can gain insights into how the imperialist system operates and what strategies and tactics will be most effective in our struggle against imperialism.

Direct costs of prisons

Total spending on prisons and jails more than quadrupled over the twenty years between 1980 and 2010, from approximately \$17 billion in 1980 to more than \$80 billion in 2010. When including expenditures for police, judicial and legal services, the direct costs reached \$261 billion.(1)

For comparison, in 2015 the United States "defense" budget was \$637 billion, up from \$379 billion in 1980, a 68% increase.(2,3) In that same period, total government spending on K-12 education more than doubled, going from \$271 billion to over \$621 billion.(3) So we can see the growth in criminal injustice system spending was dramatically faster than the growth in other government spending.

Hidden costs of prisons

Direct expenditures on prisons are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the economic impact of prisons. One study, conducted in 2016, estimated the total aggregate burden of incarceration at \$1 trillion, with an additional \$10 in social costs for every \$1 spent on corrections. This means that most of that \$1 trillion is being borne by families, community members, and prisoners themselves. (4)

Being locked up in prison comes with a lot of negative consequences beyond the obvious loss of years of one's life spent behind bars. Economically these costs include lost wages, reduced

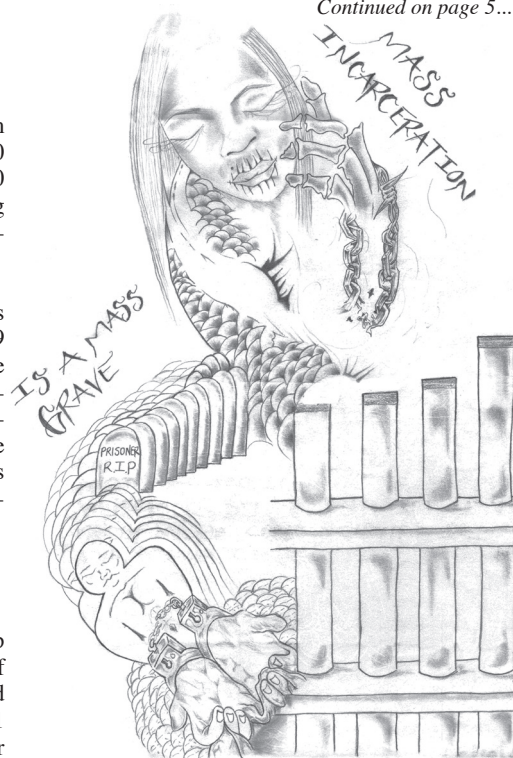
earnings once on the streets, injuries sustained behind bars (from guards and other prisoners), and for some the ultimate price of death from fatal injuries while in prison, or a shorter life expectancy for prisoners. This totals up to annual costs of just under \$400 billion dollars per year.

Estimated Costs borne by prisoners:(4)

- Lost wages while imprisoned (\$70.5 billion)
- Reduced lifetime earnings (\$230.0 billion)
- Nonfatal injuries sustained in prison (\$28.0 billion)
- Higher mortality rates of former prisoners (\$62.6 billion)
- Fatal injuries to prisoners (\$1.7 billion)

Beyond the direct costs to prisoners, family members and society in general carry an even larger financial burden. This includes direct costs like traveling for visitation of loved ones and moving costs when families can no longer af-

Continued on page 5...



Politics of Mass Incarceration

by Vera Sukhaya
February 2018

More than 2 million people are locked up in prisons and jails in the United States. This represents an incarceration rate of just under 1% of the population. Almost 7 million people were under the supervision of the adult correctional system (including parole and probation) at the end of 2015.(1) And in 2012, latest data available from the U.S. Bureau of Justice, the total money spent on the criminal injustice system across federal, state and local governments was \$265,160,340,000. Of this prisons accounted for \$80,791,046,000.(2)

Prisons are incredibly expensive for the state and prisons cost far more than they produce.(3) The question is, why does the government, at all levels, continue to spend so much money to keep so many people locked up? And why does the United States have the highest imprisonment rate of any country in the world?

Myth of the Prison Industrial Complex

The Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC) meme has become effectively popularized in the United States.(11) Behind the concept of the PIC is the belief that there are big corporate interests behind the unprecedented mass incarceration in the United States. It represents an American politic that is outwardly "anti-corporate," while denying the class structure of the country that is made up of almost completely exploiter classes.

While there are certainly some corporations that are making money off of prisons, overall prisons are a money-losing operation for the government. Basically the government is subsidizing the profits and income of a few corporations and a lot of individual so-called "workers."(see Cost of Incarceration article, this page) If we examine prison statistics, economic trends, private prisons, and the "diversity" of the prisoner population, then it becomes clear that prisons are fundamentally about social control over oppressed nations within the United States. This leads us to some important conclusions on how the prison system functions and how we should struggle against it.

Falling Rates of Incarceration

Overall, the prison and jail population in the United States has been dropping in recent years, along with the rate of incarceration. The total number of people in prison and jail started dropping in 2009 after decades of steady increases. In

Continued on page 4...

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**subscriptions are FREE for prisoners
do NOT write checks to "MIM"**

What is *Under Lock & Key*?

Under Lock & Key (ULK) is the voice of the anti-imperialist movement within prisons in the United States. It serves as a forum to develop and promote agitational campaigns led by MIM(Prisons) and United Struggle from Within (USW). It is a free newsletter for prisoners in the United States, edited and published by MIM(Prisons). It is mostly written and illustrated by USW and United Front for Peace in Prisons comrades behind bars. ULK is mailed out every other month.

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.

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).

What is United Struggle from Within?

United Struggle from Within (USW) is a MIM(Prisons)-led mass organization for U.S. prisoners and former 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. It 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 six cardinal points, but they can't consciously disagree with any of them. See page 12 for campaign info.

What is MIM(Prisons)?

The Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons, or 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. We support nations which choose to delink from the imperialist economy, including the right of the internal semi-colonies to secede from the United States. 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) expresses general unity with all other groups and outbreaks against imperialism; mass movements against oppression have as many forms as forms of power. In this spirit, we insist on telling the uncompromised truth and discussing and criticizing the strategy and tactics of any given action. MIM(Prisons) encourages everyone, communist or not, to be involved in the struggle against imperialism. MIM(Prisons) distinguishes itself 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 expanded 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 sector of the 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 Krushchev 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.

Free Political Books for Prisoners

Our Free Political Books for Prisoners Program is a Serve the People (STP) program founded on the model of the Black Panther Party's Breakfast for Schoolchildren and other STP programs, and on the basis of Mao's emphasis that communists should serve the people in everything we do. The purpose of the Free Books for Prisoners program is to help prisoners turn their time under lock and key into a time to develop their politics and build with us toward the beginnings of a more just and productive society. We collect and send out political, legal and his-

torical books primarily (we also have some dictionaries and other reference items that are useful for writers and jailhouse lawyers). The materials we distribute are selected to help people study the conditions under which they are living and to turn their knowledge into political organizing.

We know that many of our subscribers lack financial resources, and this should not be a barrier to education. Because our purpose is to organize, we expect that comrades will exchange work for the books we send. You should write articles for ULK, create revolutionary art, form study groups with other comrades and work through the study group to educate and organize, share our literature and expand our mailing list, lead campaigns against local examples of oppression, or come up with other ways to contribute to the struggle. If you can afford to send donations, and if your facility rules allow, sending us stamps is the best way to donate. We can always use them to get you more books or to help other comrades who cannot afford to pay for their books. (Tell us if you want to send a check or money order so we can send you instructions.)

We can send you a list of specific titles that we currently have available, but it is better to request general topic areas or include substitutions because our stock is constantly changing. The literature list also lists prices for the books we send in if you want to purchase them, but again, lack of funds will not keep you from getting literature, but lack of political work will. We ask you to help us build MIM(Prisons) and United Struggle from Within through your own work in exchange for the books.

If you would like to receive books from MIM(Prisons)'s Free Books for Prisoners program, please let us know the subject areas you are interested in, and the work you are doing in exchange.

Fight Censorship

Under Lock & Key, *MIM Theory*, study materials, letters, and even books like dictionaries have been censored by the state, especially ever since MIM began organizing on behalf of prisoners decades ago. If your MIM(Prisons) correspondence is censored, the first thing you need to know is that you are not alone in struggling to get your mail and reading materials. You will need to be prepared to do the work yourself (making copies of rejection notices, filing grievances, sending copies of these documents to us), but we can send instructions on how to do this. In some cases, we can support your appeals with letters of our own.

These are some basic steps we recommend to everyone in prison:

1. Find out *now* what the prison rules say about your right to receive mail and reading materials. You should read this policy carefully and get a copy for your file if possible. You can also send us copies of the rules to post on our website as a resource for the public.

2. Find out what the prison's implementation of these policies is like. Many times the policy looks reasonable on paper, but the prison staff behaves totally out of line. Ask around.

3. To keep our correspondence going, write to us every 6 months. If you're writing us regularly and are not getting any mail from us, there's a problem with your mail delivery. Do not assume we are ignoring you.

4. If your correspondence with us is censored, it is very important that you keep copies of all the paperwork, (rejection notices, grievances, etc.) and send us copies of these as well. Often this is the only way we find out that our mail has been censored. Once we know of the censorship, we can work with you to fight it.

Expand Spanish

If you write in Spanish or would like to translate *ULK* articles written in English into Spanish, this helps the development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism among the Spanish-speaking peoples of the world. If you want to do translation, let us know. If you want to submit articles in Spanish, go ahead and send them in (it helps if you can still write your letters to MIM(Prisons) in English).

Share *ULK* and Recruit New Subscribers

Let others read the literature we send you. Talk to potential comrades about our politics and work, and have them write in to get put on our mailing list. Our subscribers (you) play a vital role in the growth of our mailing list. Remember, a subscription is free!

Administrative Details

Your subscription will be active for 6 months after each time you write to us. If we do not hear from you for 6 months, you will be automatically removed from the mailing list. We recommend writing to us regularly so you don't lose track of when to update your subscription.

For people outside of prison, all issues of *ULK*, plus additional reports from within U.S. prisons, are available on the website www.prisoncensorship.info

Your address: Please send us as detailed an address as possible, including your full legal name, prison and unit name, prison ID #, street address and P.O. Box, city, state, and 9-digit zip code. Please check with the mailroom to make sure you have the correct information. This is essential for us to send you anything.

Releases: Let us know if you are looking at a (possible) release date in the next two years. We recently beefed up our release support, and it includes a lot of set-up while you're still locked up. Also let us know your expected address post-release if you have one. Even if it is only the address of a relative who you think will be in the same place for a while, this could be the difference between losing contact and staying in touch and politically active after you are released.

Your persynal papers: Do not send us legal papers that pertain to your case unless you have checked with us first. In general, we cannot do anything with your legal papers as we do not have the resources to get involved in individuals' cases. We also cannot return them to you. Rather than focus on only your case, we strongly encourage comrades to write articles about the political implications of their situation, and work on cases that will positively impact the ability for prisoners to organize against imperialism and capitalism.

Please do not send us your only copies of artwork, articles or other writings unless you are certain that you will not need them in the future. Comrades have requested that we make copies of their work and send these copies back. Doing this takes up time and money that would otherwise go to filling book requests, fighting censorship and answering letters.

Other Resources

PARC provides a free resource guide for prisoners. Tell them you heard about them from MIM(Prisons):
Prison Activist Resource Center
PO Box 70447
Oakland, CA 94612

Inside Books Projects sends free books and a resource guide to prisoners in Texas.
Inside Books Projects, 12th Street Books
827 West 12th Street
Austin TX 78701
ibp.resourceguide@gmail.com

see our partial political glossary p. 23

Choosing One Ideology Over Another: The Materialist Method

(reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement "What's Your Line" pamphlet)

"We can (and must) begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material, or with human material specially prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism. True, it is not an easy matter, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion." V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism," - An Infantile Disorder," Collected Works, Vol. 31, p. 50.

It is only by examining the practice of various ideologies over the long run of history that one can decide which ideology is the most effective in promoting the end of oppression of oppressed groups by oppressor groups. In contrast, some people think it is fair to compare an abstract idea with an actual movement. That is not materialist method. Once one allows ideas to be compared with actual, historical movements one has no way of stopping all kinds of comparisons of ideas with actual practices. One can only compare practices with practices.

It is intellectuals and Trotskyists who compare practices with ideas to see how good or bad the practice is. With this comparison, for example, it is easy to shoot down the practice of Stalinism with the ideas of Trotskyism or the ideas of Madison and Jefferson or any idea for that matter. This method is not wrong because it is Trotskyist or Madisonian. Rather, Trotskyism is wrong because it uses this idealist method to criticize Stalinism instead of comparing Trotskyist practice with Stalinist practice.

In the same vein, it's not fair to compare Maoism with Jesus Christ in the abstract. Maybe Mao did not obey the 10 Commandments. But his followers have a better practice than the Christians when it comes to ending oppression.

The only time it is correct to evaluate a practice in relationship to an idea is within that practice. Maoists can determine if there are better ways to be Maoists and tap existing potential by discussing ideas within Maoism. Even then, the only proof of the validity of a new Maoist idea is by comparing one Maoist practice with another Maoist practice.

Hence MIM uses the "where's the beef" taunt to everyone else. There are an infinity of logically consistent ideas ranging from professors' pet economic models to Hare Krishna. Only some ideas, however, have come with practices to end oppression. By choosing the ideology that goes with the most historically effective practice of social change to end oppression, one separates oneself from dogmatism and religion. Dogmatism may take the form of believing in reform no matter what; it may take the form of opposing dogma all the time, but in every case dogmatism and religion really amount to comparing apples and oranges, the apples being ideas and the oranges, practices. Dogmatists of all stripes conclude that oranges should be more like apples. In contrast, Marxist materialists just pick the best oranges.

MIM forms the following conclusions on the materialist method:

* In debate, we must decide when it is appropriate to compare practices with each other.

* Then we must decide on when it is appropriate to develop ideas within a practice.

(For more on materialism, how we study history, and how we develop our strategy, write in to our Free Books for Prisoners program. We have a number of study packs and books on this topic.) *

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. Campaign around the September 9 Day of Peace and Solidarity.

★ 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.

Cut along the dotted line to make a flyer about the United Front for Peace in Prisons. For more info about the UFFP, write to MIM(Prisons) at the address on page 1.

...Continued from page 1 ...Mass Incarceration

reality the increases in 2008 didn't keep up with the increase in population in the United States as the peak imprisonment rate was in 2007 with 1 in every 31 people being somewhere under correctional supervision (including jails, prisons, parole and probation). The prison/jail population peaked in 2006-2008 with 1% of the adult population locked up behind bars. That dropped to .87% at the end of 2015.(4)

This drop in incarceration rate starting in 2008 lines up with the peak of the recent financial crisis. It seems that the U.S. government does have some limits to their willingness to spend money on the criminal injustice system. If imprisoning people was a way to increase profits, then the numbers of prisoners would increase when there was a financial crisis, not decrease.

Private Prisons

Private prisons are a dangerous development in the American criminal injustice system. They are owned and operated by corporations for a profit. And these prisons take prisoners from any state that will pay them for the service. In states with overcrowding problems, shipping people to for-profit prisons is seen as a good option.

But these corporations also try to sell their services as cheaper and more efficient, basically reducing the already dangerously low level services to prisoners in order to save on costs, because, as we have seen, prisons are extremely costly to run.

At the end of 2015, 18 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons met or exceeded their prison facilities' maximum capacity.(5) So we might expect a lot of outsourcing to private prisons. But the actual percentage of prisoners in private prisons is relatively low. In 2015, only 8% of total state and federal prisoners were in private facilities. And this number dropped 4% from 2014.(6) This is a greater drop than the 2.2% decrease in prisoners between 2014 and 2015.

If private prisons were so successful, then we ought to see their numbers increase, not decrease. And if they were so influential with the politicians, then they would have a larger market share. Private prisons clearly are not the backbone of some "Prison Industrial Complex." Corporations have, thus far, not figured out how to successfully generate profits from prisons, beyond the subsidy hand-out they get from the government and commissary stock. On top of this, the federal and state governments are losing money by paying for prisons.

There is a lot of activism opposed to private prisons. This comes from people who generally understand that privatization of an institution usually does not have a good outcome for the oppressed. Activism can influence the government. It's possible that the voices against private prisons helped push the Obama administration to implement its policy of phasing out private prisons for Federal prisoners. The Trump administration has since repealed that policy.

But we don't believe this is a question of partisan politics anyway. The U.S. government has shown that it will stop at nothing to implement policies that push forward profitable capitalist industries. The violent attacks on activists protesting the destructive Dakota Access Pipe Line are a good case in point. This is not a fight over profitable capitalist corporations, it is a debate over which group of people get a subsidy from the government: private prison corporations, or public prison employees. Shifting away from private prisons is painless for the government, because it doesn't require a decrease in prisons, just a shift in where the money goes.

National Oppression

So, if not for profit, then why does the United States lock up so many people? The answer to this question is obvious when we look at prisoners and the history of imprisonment in this country. It is impossible to talk about prisons without talking about the tremendous disparity in the way the criminal injustice system treats Chican@s, First Nations, and New Afrikans within U.S. borders. The ridiculously high rate of incarceration of people, particularly men, from these nations, is the most obvious disparity.

Approximately 12-13% of the population of the United States is New Afrikan, but New Afrikans make up around 35% of prisoners.(7) The incarceration rate of First Nations is also disproportionately high. In South Dakota, for example, Indigenous people are 8% of the state's population, but are 22% of the state's male prison population and 35% of female prison population.(8) Meanwhile, Chican@s are imprisoned at a rate higher than Euro-Amerikkans as well.(9)

Any study of the injustice system reveals the same evidence: the majority of prisoners are from oppressed nations. This is in spite of the fact that there are more Euro-Amerikkans in the United States than all the oppressed nations combined.

This disparity starts on the streets with police occupation of oppressed communities, and continues into the courts with disproportionate sentencing, inadequate legal representation, and the conscious and unconscious bias of juries. By the time we get to prisons, we can clearly see the results of systematic national oppression in the rates of incarceration.

The aggressive use of prisons as a tool of social control started in the United States in response to the revolutionary nationalist organizations that gained tremendous popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s. As the government scrambled for an effective response to tamp down this potentially revolutionary mass movement, they turned to the police and prisons.

Between 1961 and 1968, the prison population dropped to its lowest point since the 1920s. From 1968 to 1972, the incarceration rate rose slowly. However, just following the peak of

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See the opposite side of this flyer for information on the United Front for Peace in Prisons.

Cut on the dotted line to make a bookmark or flyer about the United Front for Peace in Prisons. Use it to keep the principles of the UFPP in the front of you mind, and to share the principles with others.

We need more art the shape of this column (approximately 9" x 2.5") for the back of this flyer. We want to change the artwork with each issue. The theme of the artwork should be about the UFPP, either a principle, an image of prisoners in unity, or something similar.

Send your artwork and UFPP inquiries to:
MIM(Prisons)
PO Box 40799
San Francisco, CA 94140

...Continued from page 1

...Prison Economy

ford their homes. But also less obvious costs like the impact imprisonment has on family members which has been demonstrated to worsen the health and educational achievement of prisoners' children, leaving some homeless, lead to higher rates of divorce and also reduce the marriage rate in the community. Further there are costs to society from homelessness of released prisoners, and reentry programs and others serving prisoners.

Estimates of Costs Borne by Families, Children, and Communities:(4)

- Visitation costs (\$0.8 billion)
- Adverse health effects (\$10.2 billion)
- Infant mortality (\$1.2 billion)
- Children's education level and subsequent wages as an adult (\$30.0 billion)
- Children rendered homeless by parental imprisonment (\$0.9 billion)
- Homelessness of former prisoners (\$2.2 billion)
- Decreased property values (\$11.0 billion)
- Divorce (\$17.7 billion)
- Reduced marriage (\$9.0 billion)
- Child welfare (\$5.3 billion)

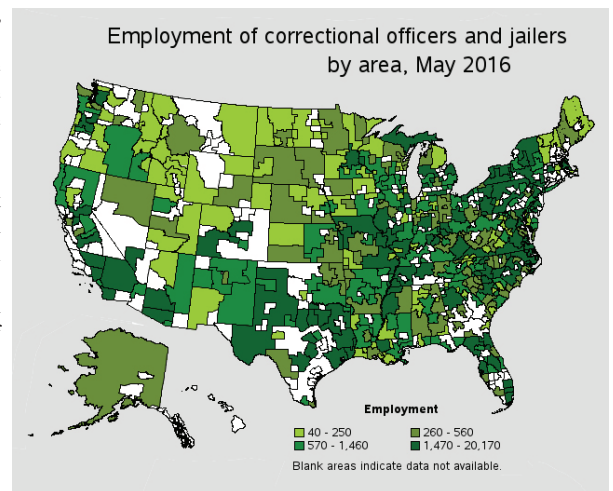
These expenses disproportionately impact oppressed nation communities as the primary target of the criminal injustice system. A majority of pris-

oners are New Afrikan and Chican@, and this is a form of economic oppression against those nations. Unlike government expenditures which create jobs and fund industries, most of these expenses do not directly financially benefit anyone. This is just economic punishment piled on top of the punishment of incarceration. The massive United States prison system is not just a tool of repression, it is actively worsening the economic conditions of oppressed nations, keeping significant sectors of these nations trapped in precarious conditions.

Prisons Create Jobs

While prisons have a devastating impact on oppressed nation communities in the United States, they play a different role for the disproportionately white employees of the criminal injustice system and the mostly rural communities in which these prisons operate.

Of the direct expenditures on prisons and jails, a lot of money goes to jobs for guards and other correctional employees. In 2016 there were 431,600 guards in prisons and jails, earning on



average \$46,750 per year or \$22.48 per hour.(5)

We can see striking examples in states like New York and California where prisons are clustered in rural white communities (upstate New York and in the central valley of California), but they are imprisoning mostly oppressed nation people from urban communities.

In 2012 (the latest data available from the U.S. Bureau of Justice) the total number of criminal injustice system employees across federal, state and local governments was 2,425,011 of which 749,418 were prison staff.(6, see map) About half of the total corrections budget goes to pay salaries for prison staff, which is two orders of magnitude more than the \$400 million in profits of private prison companies.(17)

There are other jobs generated more indirectly by prison spending: construction jobs building and maintaining prisons, and jobs in all of the industries that supply the prisons with food, bedding, clothing, and other basics required to support the prison population. While some of these costs are recovered through prisoner labor (we will address this topic in more detail in *ULK 62*), the vast majority is still paid for by the government. Vendors also make a lot of money through commissary, phone bills, and other costs to prisoners. There are clearly a lot of individuals and corporations with an economic interest in the criminal injustice system.

Most prisons are in rural areas, often in poorer parts of states. Some prison towns are entirely centered around employment at the prison, or support services like hotels for visiting families. Others may have a more diversified economy but the prisons still provide a significant number of jobs for residents. These jobs give workers, and the community their jobs are supporting, a strong interest in seeing prisons stay full or grow bigger.

In reality, many jobs in newly-built prisons go to people from outside of the community where it was built. People with experience are brought in to fill these jobs. Many of these workers commute to the prison rather than relocate to a rural town. And there is some evidence that in the

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...Mass Incarceration

revolutionary organizing in this country, there was an unbelievable increase in the incarceration rates. COINTELPRO was oriented against revolutionary organizations like the Black Panther Party and the United States began to systematically lock up or assassinate those people who were trying to fight against oppression. Almost 150,000 people were imprisoned in eight years – demonstrating the government's fear of revolutionaries.(10)

At the same time, there was a growing anti-prison movement and the government was sure to stamp out any and all dissent there as well. George Jackson's book, *Soledad Brother*, came out in 1970 and was a huge indictment of the oppression against the internal semi-colonies. The following year, he was murdered.

This disproportionate arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of oppressed nations didn't stop in the 1970s. It continues today. Internal semi-colonies are positioned in a way to maintain their subjugated status. And it is when the oppressed nations band together and organize that the Amerikkkan government strikes against them like a rabid dog.

Lessons for our Work

Understanding the injustice system is of central importance to developing a method and structure to resist the prison network. This is why it is so necessary to understand that prisons are a money-losing operation for the government, and to locate the politics of mass incarceration in the attempt at social control of oppressed nations.

If we focus on the role of prisons as social con-

trol, targeting the lumpen, we can then target the real reason for the existence of the vast Amerikan criminal injustice system. Exposing this role helps people understand just how desperate the U.S. government was in the 1970s when faced with a huge revolutionary nationalist movement. And the government is still afraid to take any significant steps away from this imprisonment solution.

That tells us they are still afraid of the oppressed nations, so much so that they don't care if a bunch of white people get swept up in the imprisonment craze.

Since social control is driving the Amerikkkan prison system, we should focus our organizing work on exactly what the government fears: organizing those being controlled. We should pick our battles to target the parts of the system that we know are vulnerable: they fear revolutionary education (censorship, bans on study groups), they fear organization (rules against groups), and they fear peaceful unity most of all (provocations of fights, pitting groups against one another). We can build this unity by spreading our analysis of the root goal of the criminal injustice system. All those targeted for social control should be inspired to get together against this system. ★

Notes:

1. *Correctional Populations in the United States 2015*, 29 December 2016, Bureau of Justice Statistics (www.bjs.gov)
2. *Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts, 2012 - Preliminary*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 26 February 2015.
3. See *Under Lock & Key* No. 55 "Labor Aristocracy and White Nationalism Benefit from Prisons, not Private Corporations."
4. *Correctional Populations, BJS*
5. *Prisoners in 2015*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2016.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Jail Inmates at Midyear 2014*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, June 2015.
8. *Mass Incarceration: A Destroyer of People of Color and Their Communities*, by Jamaal Bell, *Huffington Post*, 17 May 2010.
9. *There is a stunning gap between the number of white and black inmates in America's prisons*, *Business Insider Deutschland*.
10. *Prisoners 1925-81*, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
11. *MIM(Prisons), "The Myth of the Prison Industrial Complex," ULK 27, July 2012.*

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...Prison Economy

long run prisons are bad for the economy of rural communities. But this is definitely not a popular opinion as many communities lobby aggressively for prison construction. Once a prison is in place in a community, even if it's not working out so well, it's not easy to reverse course and change the economy. As a result some towns end up lobbying for building more prisons to help bolster their economy once they have one in place.(7)

Given the size of the criminal injustice system, and the many people employed in and around it, this is a big incentive to maintain Amerika's crazy high incarceration rates. It's like a huge public works program where the government gives money to create jobs and subsidize corporations working in and around prisons.

State vs. Federal Funding

Most prison spending is at the state level. In 2010 state governments paid 57% of the direct cash costs, while 10% came from the federal government and 33% from local governments.(1) It's all government money, but this fact is interesting because it means state economic interest is likely more important than federal economic interest in determining criminal injustice system spending.

Looking closer at state spending on prisons we find that imprisonment rates vary dramatically by state (8). Top states by incarceration rate per 100,000 adults:

- Louisiana 1370
- Oklahoma 1340
- Mississippi 1230
- Alabama 1140
- Georgia 1140
- Texas 1050
- Arizona 1050
- Arkansas 1050

All other states have rates under 1000 with a few states down in the 300s.

Prison populations are still growing in a few states, but in the top imprisonment rate states listed above only Arizona's population grew between 2014 and 2015 (1.6%). Most of the states with a rate increase between 2014 and 2015 were very small states with smaller prison populations

overall.(9)

There is a skewing towards high imprisonment rates in southern states. These are typically poorer states with fewer economic resources. It's possible these states feel a stronger drive to build prisons as an economic growth tool, in spite of the evidence mentioned above now suggesting this isn't necessarily the best path for towns to take. It's an interesting "investment" decision by these poorer southern states that suggests there is more than just economics in play since it is a money-losing operation for already financially strapped states.

Just as the decrease in country-wide imprisonment rates coincided with the peak of the recession in 2008, it's inevitable that economic interests by the states, and by the many employees of the criminal injustice system, are also influencing prison growth and prison shrinkage. In some cases it is a battle between the interests of the prison workers, who want prisons to grow, and the states that want to stop bleeding so much money into the prisons. In each state different conditions will determine who wins.

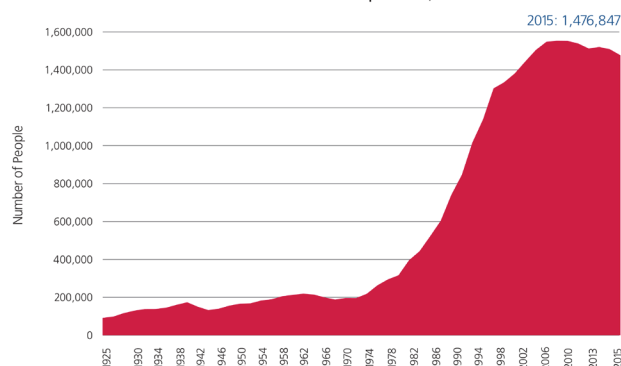
Economic Crisis and State Responses

In 2009, MIM(Prisons) looked at the potential of the economic crisis to motivate a reduction in prison populations to address state budget shortages. We cited a few examples painting that as an unlikely scenario. The statistics do show that the total imprisoned population has dipped since then. Here we revisit some of the big prison states to see how things have shaken out since 2008.

If anything, overcrowding continues to be a bigger issue in many states than funding issues. Though overcrowding may reflect a reluctance to build new facilities, which is related to budgets. Ohio just celebrated a modest decrease in their prison population at the end of 2017.(10) At 49,420, the population was a few thousands smaller than projected four years earlier when things weren't looking so good.(11) But overall the numbers have just hovered around 50,000 since before the 2008 economic crisis.

Ohio was looking to the court-ordered prison population reduction in California as an example of what might happen there if they didn't get their numbers under control. The California reduction (or "realignment") was to address overcrowding in response to a lawsuit about conditions, and not budget problems. It was significant, with a reduction of almost 30,000 prisoners in the year following the "realignment." Numbers are even lower today. How-

U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoners Series.



ever, county populations have increased as a result, with an estimated increase of 1 county prisoner for every 3 reduced in the state system. In other words, the county population was up over 10,000 people following the realignment.(12) Still California accounted for a majority of the decrease in prisoners in the United States since 2010.

Former Illinois Governor Pat Quinn canceled plans to close Pontiac Correctional Center back in 2009. But current Governor Bruce Rauner has a plan to reduce the population by 25% over the next decade, already having reduced it by thousands over a couple years.(13) The Illinois state system also remains over capacity at this time. However, Governor Rauner primarily cites fiscal concerns as his motivation for the reforms. (14) Texas also recently reduced its population by 5,000, closing one prison. Both Texas and Illinois did this by putting more money into treatment programs and release resources.(14)

Pennsylvania has also implemented reforms in sentencing and preventing recidivism.(15) After the passing of the 2012 Justice Reinvestment Act, population numbers began to level off and even decrease by hundreds each year. Like Ohio, Pennsylvania's population has been hovering around 50,000, and like many other states these numbers remain over capacity for the state (which is closer to 43,000).(16)

Overall we're still talking about fairly marginal numbers here, and not a systematic transformation. We peaked at 2.3 million prisoners in the United States, and now we're closer to 2.1 million. Still by far the highest imprisonment rate in the world. Ultimately, the economic crisis of 2008 did not have a huge impact on Americans because of the ability of imperialism to push crisis off on the periphery. But we can conclude from this experience that a serious economic crisis is not enough to significantly change the course of the massive American injustice system.

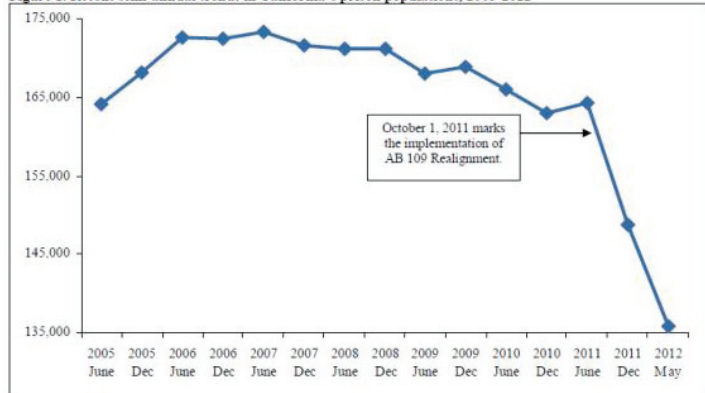
Conclusions

Prisoners, their family and the community pay a heavy price for imprisonment, and this includes a significant financial cost. The impact on oppressed nation communities plays into the ongoing national oppression that is part of imperialism. So

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Reduction in prison population in California

Figure 1. Recent semi-annual trends in California's prison populations, 2005-2012



Source: CDCR (2012).

Alabama Sheriffs Profit by Starving Prisoners

by MIM(Prisons)
February 2018

In Alabama the law offers economic incentives to starve prisoners. Sheriffs get \$1.75 per prisoner per day to feed people in jail, and they get to pocket any of that money not spent on food. According to the Southern Center for Human Rights, the sheriff in Etowah County "earned" \$250,000 in 2016 by starving prisoners in that county.

At least forty-nine Sheriffs are refusing to report how much food money they are pocketing. Civil rights groups are suing these Sheriffs in an attempt to require them to release this information. But that still leaves the broader problem of the law that many are interpreting to allow Sheriffs to profit by starving prisoners.

As we discussed in the article "MIM(Prisons) on U.S. Prison Economy - 2018 Update," (see p. 1) criminal injustice system employees in the United States are the primary financial beneficiaries of the largest prison system in the world. Good pay and job security are appealing enough to draw many to this profession that exists off the oppression and suffering of others. With a system structured in this way, we shouldn't be surprised that Sheriffs in Alabama feel entitled to pocket money intended to feed people in their jails. ★

Note:
The Daily Beast, Alabama Sheriffs Filled Their Wallets by Starving Prisoners, 10 January 2018.

WRITE FOR ULK

Planned themes for upcoming issues:

61 - Sex Offenders Debated

The "sex offender" label is used by the state to frame people, for reasons of political struggle and national oppression. Yet we also need to seriously struggle over crimes against the people, including sexual assault. How can we develop our movement to best address these contradictions?

62 - Prisoner labor - See our survey on page 21.

63 - Organizer Techniques

Do you find people in your facility impossible to relate to? Do your organizing conversations seem to go nowhere? Do you struggle to get people to see the importance of writing grievances, or participating in campaigns?

Or do you have some of this figured out? How do you communicate with and motivate others? How do you help them find their inner leader and develop it? Have you figured out how to get around common conversation blocks? We want to hear from you! Send us your sample dialogues, and yard-tested organizing approaches.

The Wizard Behind the Curtain of Mass Incarceration

by USW23 of United Struggle from Within
July 2017

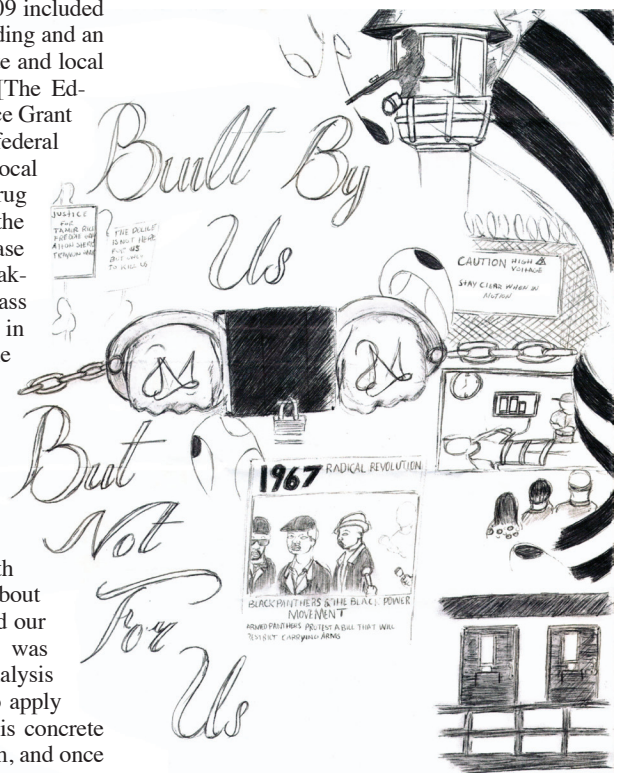
After reading *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*, by Professor Michelle Alexander, one can see the dynamics of how the political economy shaped the prison system by taking away the jobs which would in fact increase the crime rate. It's been reported over time that the CIA was the biggest drug trafficker in the country and flooded the inner cities across Amerikkka, which only made room for one thing - distribution by the inhabitants of the inner city. Due to this new social phenomenon, lawmakers had a field day with funding SWAT teams to serve narcotic warrants, and perform paramilitary drug raids throughout the United States.

The Economic Recovery Act of 2009 included more than \$2 billion in new Byrne funding and an additional \$600 million to increase state and local law enforcement across the country. [The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program is the primary provider of federal criminal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions. - Editor] Multi-agency drug task forces receive their finances from the federal government to help them increase the prison population, while the lawmakers come together to get Congress to pass laws that will keep inner city youths in prison for mandatory minimums. The 3-strikes-you're-out law orchestrated by Bill Clinton allowed all the newly-built prisons, (California built new prisons from the 1980s to 2000) to stay full, and also allowed other states to use this same sentencing method.

Before coming to prison, I along with others from the inner city had no idea about the political landscape that jump started our oppression. What shaped our views was learning how to apply a concrete analysis of the concrete conditions, and how to apply this philosophy within our culture. This concrete analysis is called dialectical materialism, and once

used correctly we were able to better understand our situation and how to change our conditions. Through the study of our New Afrikan history we realize our struggle was always due to our resisting oppression. Oppression from the same class of people who first enslaved us once arriving on these shores, via a capitalist/imperialist system, established through military conquest, that controls you economically.

We New Afrikans have become political prisoners by challenging these imperialists' control over us through their oppression and have established a social, cultural, economic, ideological, religious, military, and personal interaction between us as a group of people in a society. Our politics encompasses the totality of all human activity and relationships. ★



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...Prison Economy

we shouldn't be surprised by an imperialist society tolerating and even perpetuating these costs.

But prisons also cost the government a lot of money. And clearly these costs have not deterred the United States government from maintaining the highest imprisonment rate in the world. It's a very expensive public works program, if all this money is being spent just to supply jobs to the many workers in and around the criminal injustice system. Although these jobs do provide significant political incentive to sustain prisons at their current level, Amerikan capitalist history provides us with plenty of examples of cheaper and more socially productive programs that create jobs for groups currently employed by the criminal injustice system. It's clearly a political choice to continue with this expenditure and pour money

into a costly system of social control.

Some anti-prison activists try to use the high costs of prison to their advantage, organizing around slogans that emphasize that this money could be better spent elsewhere, like on education. The 10-year aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis demonstrates the weakness of this approach. The social forces of change are not coming from state bureaucracy budget offices. The social forces for change are the oppressed nations that are still being targeted by the out-of-control injustice system, and the lumpen organizations that come up as a means of self-defense from this oppression. ★

Notes:

1. Ten Economic Facts about Crime and Incarceration in the United States, Hamilton Project Policy Memo, 1

Continued on page 24...

China's Role in Increasing Inter-Imperialist Rivalries

by Wiawimawo of MIM(Prisons)
February 2018

In my last article on China I rehashed the 40-year-old argument that China abandoned the socialist road, with some updated facts and figures. (1) The article started as a review of the book *Is China an Imperialist Country?* by N.B. Turner, but left most of that question to be answered by Turner's book.

We did not publish that article to push some kind of struggle against Chinese imperialism. Rather, as we explained, it was an attack on the promotion of revisionism within the forum www.reddit.com/r/communism, and beyond. The forum's most-enforced rule is that only Marxists are allowed to post and participate in discussion there. Yet almost daily, posts building a personality cult around Chinese President Xi Jinping, or promoting some supposed achievement of the Chinese government, are allowed and generally receive quick upvotes.

The title of our previous article asking "is China in 2017 Socialist or Imperialist?" may be misunderstood to mean that China must be one or the other. This is not the case. Many countries are not socialist but are also not imperialist. In the case of China, however, it is still important (so many years after it abandoned socialism) to clarify that it is a capitalist country. And so our positive review of a book discussing Chinese imperialism became a polemic against those arguing it is socialist.

One of the major contradictions in the imperialist era is the inter-imperialist contradiction. The United States is the dominant aspect of this contradiction as the main imperialist power in the world today. And currently Russia and China are growing imperialist powers on the other side of this inter-imperialist contradiction. Reading this contradiction as somehow representative of the class contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat or of the principal contradiction between oppressed nations and oppressor nations would be an error.

We have continued to uphold that China is a majority exploited country, and an oppressed nation. (2) But China is a big place. Its size is very much related to its position today as a rising imperialist power. And its size is what allows it to have

this dual character of both a rising imperialist class and a majority proletariat and peasantry. Finally, its size is part of what has allowed an imperialist class to rise over a period of decades while insulating itself from conflict with the outside world – both with exploiter and exploited nations.

A major sign that a country is an exploiting country is the rise and subsequent dominance of a non-productive consumer class. At first, the Chinese capitalists depended on Western consumers to grease the wheels of their circulation of capital. While far from the majority, as in the United States and Europe, China has more recently begun intentionally developing a domestic consumer class. (3) This not only helps secure the circulation of capital, but begins to lay the groundwork for unequal exchange that would further favor China in its trade with other countries. Unequal exchange is a mechanism that benefits the rich First World nations, and marks a more advanced stage of imperialism than the initial stages of exporting capital to relieve the limitations of the nation-state on monopoly capitalism. As we stated in the article cited above, China's size here becomes a hindrance in that it cannot become a majority exploiter country, having 20% of the world's population, without first displacing the existing exploiter countries from that role. Of course, this will not stop them from trying and this will be a contradiction that plays out in China's interactions with the rest of the world and internally. At the same time with an existing "middle class" that is 12-15% of China's population, they are well on their way to building a consumer class that is equal in size to that of America's. (3)

In our last article, we hint at emerging conflicts between China and some African nations. But the conflict that is more pressing is the fight for markets and trade dominance that it faces with the United States in the Pacific region and beyond. China remains, by far, the underdog in this contradiction, or the rising aspect. But again, its size is part of what gives it the ability to take positions independent of U.S. imperialism.

As we stated in our most recent article, this contradiction offers both danger and opportunity. We expect it to lead to more support for anti-imperialist forces as the imperialists try to undercut each other by backing their enemies. Then, as anti-imperialism strengthens, the imperialists will

face more global public opinion problems in pursuing their goals of exploitation and domination. In other words, a rising imperialist China bodes well for the international proletariat. Not because China is a proletarian state, but because the era of U.S. hegemony must end for a new era of socialism to rise. We should be clear with people about the definitions of imperialism and socialism to make this point.

What is the Third World?

by MIM(Prisons)
October 2015

A USW comrade asks: Recently I was having a conversation here with someone about the "Third World." This person didn't think **all** of Africa, Asia & Latin America was still the "Third World." I wasn't totally sure. He also asked exactly what qualifies a country for Third World status. I had no answer, he asked someone outside prison who looked online and stated all Latin America is still Third World but China was now considered "Second World," is this true? Can you send me an article on "Third World" - past, present, and future? Thank you.

MIM(Prisons) responds: The use of the terms First, Second and Third World arose during the Cold War, when the Western imperialist-led block was referred to as the First World, the communist block was the Second World, and the Third World were the so-called non-aligned countries who were also the most exploited and underdeveloped countries by design.

Mao Zedong put forth an alternative assessment of the world using these terms. By this time the Soviet Union had clearly gone back on the capitalist road. So while the West saw the Soviet Union as communist, China saw it correctly as imperialist. Mao therefore labeled the two superpowers, USA and the Soviet Union, as the First World. He grouped other imperialist countries as the Second World, which he saw as potential allies against the First World. Then the exploited countries he saw as the Third World, including socialist countries like China itself.

Today, the general usage of the term Third World is more consistent and it is closer to the way Mao defined it. It might be used interchangeably

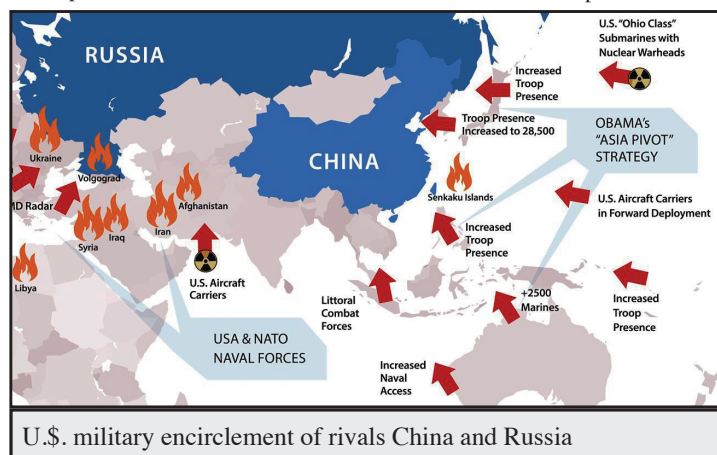
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Whether N.B. Turner agrees with us on these points is unclear. It is possible his line is closer to Bromma's, who we critiqued because he "claims a trend towards equalization of classes internationally, reducing the national contradictions that defined the 20th century." (3) As mentioned above it seems highly unlikely for China to be able to replicate the class structure of the United States. And it is absolutely impossible to recreate it globally.

China's potential to play a progressive role in the world in coming years does not change the fact that the counter-revolution led by Deng Xiaoping dismantled the greatest achievement towards reaching communism so far in history. If we do not learn from that very painful setback, then we are not applying the scientific method and we will not even know what it is that we are fighting for. How and when socialism ended in China is a question that is fundamental to Maoism. ★

Notes:

1. Wiawimawo, October 2017, *China 2017: Socialist or Imperialist?*, Under Lock & Key 59.
2. MIM(Prisons), October 2015, *What is the Third World?*
3. Wiawimawo, May 2014, *Bromma's Worker Elite and the Global Class Analysis*, Under Lock & Key Issue 40.



On the Iran Protests

by Amber B.

reprinted from www.anti-imperialism.org

January 2018

There's been a lot of buzz in the mainstream media and the moribund neoliberal establishment over the hope for disintegration in the opposing camp. They pour all of their hopes and project all their fantasies onto the protests in Iran, and make international shows of support for movements they seem to know very little about. What else is new? Unfortunately, they are not the only ones projecting fantasies. Some leftists are also quick to jump on board, spitballing about the possibilities for people's war and socialist revolution in Iran. These organizations are, of course, western, as not even the Tudeh Party has made such overblown and incred-

ible remarks. This amounts to nothing more than lying to ourselves and others, something which does not serve our interests, but could indeed serve the interests of the imperialists.

That said, there are others who wish to dismiss all complaints of the Iranian people as simply western conspiracy. This too is going out on a limb without much hard evidence. Certainly the west is involved in giving support, both open and secret, to institutions that hope to lead the further destabilization of Iran. They have used their various loyal propaganda outlets to spew near constant lies about the size and intensity of the protests, which are contradicted by the array of angles offered by the wide presence of smartphones and handheld cameras in the country, and encourage an intensification of

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...Third World

with terms like "exploited nations," "oppressed nations," "underdeveloped countries," "periphery" or "global south." In 1974 Mao said, "The third world has a huge population. With the exception of Japan, Asia belongs to the third world. The whole of Africa belongs to the third world and Latin America too." (1) To this day, this is probably the most common view of who is the Third World. But of course it is more nuanced than that.

It is worth mentioning the more recent use of the term **Fourth World** to refer to indigenous populations that are not really integrated into the capitalist world economy. This points to the reality that the vast populations that we might lump into the category of Third World can vary greatly themselves. The distinction is a more useful point when analyzing conditions within a Third World country than when doing a global analysis.

In the earlier years of the Soviet Union, Stalin summed up Lenin's theory of imperialism and split "the population of the globe into two camps: a handful of 'advanced' capitalist countries which exploit and oppress vast colonies and dependencies, and the huge majority consisting of colonial and dependent countries which are compelled to wage a struggle for liberation from the imperialist yoke." (2) This is how we view the world today, when there is no socialist block with state power. But we also know that historically the socialist USSR and socialist China both saw themselves in the camp of the exploited countries, or the Third World.

In our glossary, we define Third World as, "The portion of the geographic-social world subjected to imperialist exploitation by the First World." If this is our working definition, we might choose to use the term "exploited nations" to be more clear. But this comrade brings up a good question asking about China. And it leads us to the question, is China still an exploited nation?

We will only superficially address this question here, but we think the obvious answer is "yes." It was only recently that the peasantry ceased to be the majority in China. And after the destruction of socialist organizing in the mid-1970s, the conditions of the peasantry quickly

deteriorated pushing people to leave their homelands for the cities. While urban wages have seen steady growth in recent years, even that masks a vast and diverse population. The average annual income of \$9,000 puts an urban Chinese worker in the neighborhood of earning the value of their labor. (3) But the average is greatly skewed by the wealthy, and most workers actually make far less than \$9,000 a year. Combine them with the almost 50% of the population in the rural areas and we've got a majority exploited population.

Another way to think about China as a whole is that it accounts for about 25% of global production. (4) Capitalism cannot function and pay over a quarter of the world's productive labor more than the value they produce. Keeping all the value of your own labor (and more) is an elite benefit only granted to a tiny minority found almost wholly in the First World. There is really no feasible path forward that leads to the vast majority of Chinese people benefiting from imperialism when they make up almost 20% of the world's people. This is a contradiction that Chinese finance capitalists must deal with.

While the modern interpretation of the term Third World tends to be a descriptive term for the conditions of that country alone, the definitions from the Cold War era actually defined Third World countries by how they relate in the global balance of power. To define a country as Third World is more meaningful when it is done to define its interests in relation to others. Can we count on the Chinese to take up anti-imperialism or not? Or, as Mao put it, who are our friends and who are our enemies? That is the important question.

While we see the makings of more and more revolutionary nationalist organizing by other nations against China in the future, we cannot put the Chinese nation in the camp of oppressor nations. It is our position that some 80% of the world are of the oppressed nations that oppose imperialism. Including China as an oppressor nation would push that number down near 60%. But the conditions in China just don't support that categorization.

The bourgeois myth is that the world has been in a period of peace since the end of World War

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II. The MIM line has always been that World War III is under way, it's just taken the form of the First World vs. the Third World, so First Worlders don't worry about it so much. In recent years that has begun to change as witnessed in thinly veiled conflicts in places like Ukraine and Syria. In recent months we've seen U.S. and Russian military on the same battlefield, not on the same side. And both countries are gearing up to increase their military's involvements in that war in Syria. This is the first time that the inter-imperialist contradiction has been so acute since Gorbachev took power in the Soviet Union in 1985 and began the dissolution of the union in partnership with the Western imperialists.

Politically speaking, it would be reasonable to consider countries like Russia, as well as China, to be the Second World today, as they provide a counterbalance to the imperialist interests of the dominant imperialist powers of Europe, Japan and, most importantly, the United States. As such, Russia and China can play progressive roles as a side-effect of them pursuing their own non-progressive interests, because they challenge the dominant empire. However, we have not seen the term Second World used in this way, and you don't really hear the term these days. Perhaps the growing inter-imperialist conflict will warrant its comeback. ★

Notes:

1. Editorial Department of People's Daily, Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, Foreign Languages Press: Peking, 1 November 1977, p. 4.

2. J.V. Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism," Works, Volume 6, 1924, Red Star Press: London, p. 97.

3. Wages and Employment, 4 August 2015, China Labour Bulletin. (this is based on government statistics)

4. Made in China?, The Economist, 14 March 2015.

Political Economy of Mass Incarceration: Got to pay the piper

by a Virginia prisoner
January 2018

They call this penal correctional nightmare we live through today "rehabilitation," which takes millions off the streets to feel the reign. Years of disfranchisement, hatred, street wars that last decades, as well as innocent bystanders gunned down, as tears flow from mothers' eyes.

We are investments as soon as we jump off the porch, moving targets for bounty hunters. But they got us focusing on the gang, when the biggest gang is theirs. It has been seen on TV: dump-trucks of guns being delivered to children high on PCP on the streets of Chicago, or the deliverance of cocaine to Rick Ross/Nicky Barnes. But now we got a problem with Mexicans importing a little weed over the border? Get the F out of here! The

government is El Chapo, when that same gov benefits/prospers off every play.

They call this justice. Alright, where is the justice in charging \$3 a day for being in your jail? Or charging \$1 for a 15-cent soup? Or matter of fact \$8-15 for a free long distance call. Do you see the incentives? Also you got private institutions that pay for a full prison population (90+%). So why would I not hire more police to put more minorities in here?

If we truly hate white superiority/supremacy, why do we kill our own at a higher rate than the right-wing klan or policemen? When the government owns the whole monopoly board. Every day is the million man/woman march. All we got to do is follow the examples already solidified. Call out our heads or our officials that hold any position.

Mumia Abu Jamal said it best, "The state would rather give me an Uzi than a microphone."

MIM(Prisons) responds: This comrade is right to expose the private industry benefits of the criminal injustice system. And also the hypocrisy of the government's claims that prisons are being used for justice when it is the government that is the biggest gang, drug dealer, and criminal. But we can't ignore that prisons are a money-losing operation for the government. Sure the private industries that are profiting do lobby for more prisons, and that's a financial interest for sure. But the government itself is losing money.

Social control must be the driving reason behind the enormous money-sucking prison system in the United States. The criminal injustice system serves that purpose of social control of oppressed nations within U.S. borders. ★

... Continued from previous page

...Iran

violence. Amad News and the National Council for Resistance in Iran are two fine examples of this. Despite this, the notion of western conspiracy being behind it all is lazy and paints the imperialists as all-powerful, erasing the complexity of contradiction at the national and international level.

So if not conspiracy, then what? The protests first began in Mashhad, in the eastern half of the country, and were initially provoked by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) liquidating the assets of Mizan, a semi-official private creditor in the country, after it declared bankruptcy. Among the assets seized by the CBI were the savings and pensions of many citizens who were given nothing in return. Righteous outrage ensued, not only over the loss of their pensions and savings, but over general economic anxieties fed by the changing state economy, due mostly to ongoing privatization in the banking system that started in the early 2000's. As the protests expanded, foundationless groups seized on the opportunity to attempt to build a social base. Monarchists and pro-western liberals, who made up a minority of those involved, attempted to agitate for regime change. These are the likely candidates for western backing, but their ineptitude prevents them from really growing in size to challenge the state.

Then came western backing through the UN and proposed sanctions on the country in the midst of public outcry. This, along with the participation by Monarchists and western liberals, alienated many of the people who were deeply concerned about economic conditions, especially since western sanctions mean even tougher times for Iranian workers. Despite the daily western media coverage of the protests, and the violence that has resulted from them, they have remained rather small, at least in comparison to prior protests. In 2009 during the election crisis, millions of people flooded the streets to protest, and videos could be seen of streets swollen with agitators. Yet now the protests seem typically to involve protesters

ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. Ironically, videos shared widely on social media of great crowds of marchers were actually of Bahraini protesters, agitating against the Sunni dictatorship in the country. Again, the fantasies of westerners have gotten the better of them.

So what should our position on all this be? Any position by western communists must be anchored to our political responsibilities, and to anti-imperialism. It does not serve us nor does it serve the international communist movement to engage in this kind of flippant exaggeration. Iran is not on the cusp of a people's war, nor are they looking at the immediate threat of insurrection and regime change, although this could change in time. These protests are nowhere near the intensity of the protests which occurred in 2009, and so we can conclude that the Iranian government has weathered worse storms than the present paltry demonstrations.

Iran has been a great ally to the people's movements of the world, and has contributed greatly to the struggle against western imperialism. However, we understand that the reactionary state is far from good for the proletariat of Iran. In addition to reactionary, conservative rule, the working class has suffered the brunt of greater reforms under Rouhani, privatizing institutions and slashing public wealth for the sake of investment. There are legitimate reasons to struggle against the Iranian state. The recklessness of neoliberal reformers like Rouhani are likely to create many more legitimate reasons to struggle against the state, as more people find themselves in economically precarious positions due to the downward pressure placed on their livelihoods. To write this all off as imperialist conspiracy is ridiculous. So long as there is capitalism, there will always be a legitimate reason to struggle.

That said, we have no power to leverage against the Iranian state, and no vanguard party with which to forge formal ties with Iranian comrades. Even so, our obligations are anti-imperialist. The amerikan state presents the greatest danger to the world proletariat at this moment, and

that is something we certainly do have power to leverage against. Therefore we should set 2 principal objectives regarding the Iran protests:

(1) Oppose western yellow journalism and disinformation regarding the Iran protests. Their dishonesty and alarmism has done nothing but promote reactionary intervention against the Iranian state, including sanctions and destructive warmongering policies, which pose an immense threat to the Iranian proletariat. We must cut through the lies and propaganda to expose what is really happening.

(2) Agitate against imperialist intervention. The united States has prepared a series of sanction proposals in the UN and has been attempting to whip up the amerikan people into supporting further aggressive action against the Iranian state. This is part of a longstanding strategy, intensified by Trump, which has the aim of reconquering the country and dominating it through neocolonial policies. No matter the angle, we must oppose all attempts by the united States to insert itself into Iranian affairs.

The deadly cabal of amerikan imperialists and the propagandists in the media have already cost too many lives in Iran. Our policy toward this situation should be uniform with our regular policy on the amerikan state: imperialist hands off the Third World! Communists are, or at least should be, the advanced guard of the resistance to amerikan imperialism. Our primary focus is not the defeat of the Iranian state, but the amerikan state, and all other policies should stem from that. In the tradition of Lenin on revolutionary defeatism, our mission is to transform the international struggle into a national one, the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war. We cannot do that if we continue to backhandedly endorse the legitimacy of amerikan action internationally, and to sing the same tune as the imperialists. We must remain critical, and opposed in every way to their activities as our principal enemy.

On this note, we invoke a common Iranian saying: "death to amerika!" Sound good? ★

Using TX Pack to Help Others

by a Texas prisoner
February 2018

24 OCTOBER 2016 – Here at the McConnell Unit in Belville, Texas, it is very, very, hard to get prisoners involved in such issues as 1) Campaign to resist restrictions on indigent correspondence; 2) Petition the Federal Trade Commission: TDCJ's monopoly on stationary; 3) We demand our grievances are addressed in Texas, etc, etc.

I've shared the Texas Pack with several prisoners and some just say that they are not interested. As long as they let prisoners here watch TV, go to the commissary, use the phone, play dominoes, chess, and scrabble, people don't care. It's all they care about, which in reality is very sad. Because these are issues that affect us all as a whole group. And in some cases violate our civil and constitutional rights.

The Texas Pack has given me very helpful information for not only my own benefit but to help other prisoners who ask for help, and especially those that are monolingual and don't know how to file a grievance, etc. The information that y'all supply me has not only helped me but for me to help others, which I do almost on a daily basis. Thank y'all very much!

MIM(Prisons) responds: This author is using the Texas Pack exactly as it's intended – not to be hoarded as a personal reference, but to be shared with others so we can all benefit. Ey also brings up an all-too-frequent complaint about prisoners in Texas: that they are checked out and unwilling to stand up for their rights or the rights of others. What is the difference between this writer, and the people ey is saying only care about board games and TV? Obviously there are activists in TDCJ facilities. How are they made?

Even people who seem to only care about board games and TV, we know they're not just lazy or don't care. It is likely a defense mechanism they've developed over time. If i only care about TV, i can have some happiness even though i'm in prison. If i only care about TV, i can for the most part avoid attention from prison staff. If i only care about TV, i

can access something i want; i can escape from my reality for a short time; etc.

It's unlikely, though, that these folks only care about TV, even though that's what they're projecting. Presenting the grievance petition to them, while it's a righteous campaign, often just makes people defensive. They're defensive because they need to protect this narrative that they've created about their "values," often times in order to just get through the day, and cope with their harsh reality.

Certainly with some people we can present a valid campaign, they'll recognize it as a valid campaign, and they'll come on board. But people who are defensive or prone to stagnation need a different approach.

A good place to start in trying to organize these folks is to figure out what they do care about, besides TV. They may not want to talk about it, it may be sad and upsetting to care about things you can't have (such as affection with your children while you're in prison, for example). But we can still try to help them figure it out. Help them develop their identity around their own value system, rather than the value system put upon them by bourgeois society and imprisonment.

How do they want to be seen by the world, their family, their peers? What do they want to stand for? What have they done in the past that they felt good about, that represents how they see themselves? When we know answers to these questions, we can help show how their values actually relate to the campaigns outlined in the Texas Pack and the pages of *ULK*.

Issue 63 of *ULK* is going to be focused on this topic of tactical organizing approaches, and the nitty gritty of building the United Front for Peace in Prisons. We want our subscribers to send in methodology and tools which have helped them in their organizing efforts. Even if it doesn't have a formal name, can you spell out your approach for dealing with ambivalence, or ignorance, or even a disorganized study group meeting? We want to hear about it and share it with others! ★

Successes Against Retaliation

by a Texas prisoner
November 2017

Just a short letter to let you know that I received your Texas Pack, which I found to have lots of needed information in it. The issue of the July/August *Under Lock & Key* was DENIED because of something on page 11 of the publication. I appealed the denial and lost, but I mailed it home for future reading.

I am a victim of harassment and retaliation, which stems from my constant filing of complaints and grievances, condemning the unprofessional actions of unit officials and officers. I've had to endure some pretty rough times because of my never-ending flow of complaints. Unit officials have conspired to file false disciplinary infractions against me in hopes of silencing me or discrediting me. During my last stint of incarceration (1997-2003) unit officials told me that if I didn't stop filing complaints, that they were going to make my time hard. They filed an infraction of "assault on an officer," which had me thrown in solitary and stripped of my trustee status and good time. When I continued to file grievances against the unjust actions they had taken against me, I was once again charged with "assault on an officer" (my foot accidentally bumped an officer's foot). They were trying to prove that I couldn't beat them. Well, I eventually got one officer fired for harassment and retaliation, and a Lieutenant was allowed to resign and return in six months. When he returned, he was sent to another unit, (where I had also been sent to) and had to work as a regular CO for six months before he could apply for his rank back.

Continued on page 17...

BECOME A ULK FIELD CORRESPONDENT

For *ULK* we look for news and articles with theoretical and anti-imperialist content. We also want to feature articles that show how people have organized against these conditions, and not just document them.

If you've written us a letter, then you have all the skills you need to become a *ULK* Field Correspondent. 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.

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.



- 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 with USW by working on these campaigns, or initiating your own.

AZTLÁN UNIFICATION

Write in to MIM(Prisons) to be kept in the loop on the efforts to unify Aztlán. In August 2017 we celebrated the anniversary of the Plan de San Diego, and plans are under way for another commemoration in 2018. We will also be coordinating an Aztlán study group in the spring, see p. 16 for more info.

BUILD A UNITED FRONT FOR PEACE IN PRISONS

Organize locally for the September 9th Day of Peace and Solidarity, to promote the United Front for Peace in Prisons and an end to conflict amongst prisoners. The principal contradiction that must be unraveled to address many of the problems prisoners face is petty divisions that prevent unity. See page 3 for more info on what the UFPP is about and how you can get involved, including a flyer you can use to share with others.

OHIO GRIEVANCE GUIDE

A comrade in Ohio with much experience writing successful grievances developed a pamphlet full of advice on how to fight prison abuses using the administrative procedures, and how to win them. Send in a SASE for this grievance guide (Ohio only).

CALL TO ACTION AT HDSP IN NEVADA

"The Nevada Council for USW is putting the call out for prisoners at High Desert State Prison to end all hostilities, and join together in the ongoing grievance campaign and ultimately the mass 1983 Civil Complaint campaign, that is now underway. ... Our main focus is and must be the lack of programs, education, and work abilities which deny prisoners housed at HDSP the credits which shorten their sentences. We are in this position that we are in because our national groups have failed to be properly mobilized around an internationalist class consciousness. We have focused on individualistic issues. We as prisoners have allowed this to happen to ourselves. With each new restriction imposed, no action or protest was organized. We are as much to blame as anyone else. Without organized opposition, the administrators have reached new heights of repression and disregard of our needs.

"We are calling on all nations within the walls of HDSP; PC, GP or otherwise, to put aside your differences and conflicts. ... To aid in this struggle, we have compiled examples of grievances that have been filed, covering all three grievance levels. We are also writing up an example civil complaint, which can be utilized to challenge the NDOC in court. ... Stop all hostilities, and pick up the pen!"

Nevada is where the first September 9 Day of Peace and Solidarity originated in 2012. It's good to see comrades in Nevada keeping it moving. Any prisoners of the state of NV can write to MIM(Prisons) for a copy of the example grievances.

SPREAD UNDER LOCK & KEY

Our subscriber list grows in many ways: comrades passing around issues and lit; sending us sign-up lists of new subscribers; getting ads in other prisoner publications; and doing organizing work that attracts attention of the imprisoned masses. A basic task you can do for USW is get people to subscribe to *ULK*. It is free for U.S. prisoners!

A very effective method is to ask other prison publications to run free ads for *Under Lock & Key* and MIM(Prisons)'s Free Political Books for Prisoners Program. The ad could say something like "MIM(Prisons) is a revolutionary anti-imperialist group fighting criminal injustice, and helping prisoners to organize and educate themselves. Sends free political books and dictionaries, offers a free subscription to their newspaper *Under Lock & Key*, and runs correspondence study courses. Write to MIM(Prisons) for a free subscription." Be sure to include our contact info from page 1.

If you know someone who likes this newsletter, have em write to get eir own subscription. People are moved all the time and it's better to get in contact when our address is available than to lose your one contact who got it.

WE DEMAND OUR GRIEVANCES ARE ADDRESSED

If you are experiencing problems with your grievance process, such as delays, unanswered grievances, or harassment, you should join this campaign. Petitions are available for Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas. Write in to get the petition for your state. If your prison's policies allow, give stamps or envelopes to your comrades inside to mail out the petition. If you can't make your own copies, then tell us why and we can send you extras. Remember, you need to send them out to the administrators and politicians yourself. MIM(Prisons) doesn't have the resources to mail out the petitions for you.

Spread This Campaign - If your state is not currently covered by the grievance campaign, volunteer to rewrite the petition to work for your state. We also have a version that can be used country-wide, for people in county jails or who can't otherwise rewrite the petition.

Update This Campaign - If you participated in this campaign in the past, send us a report on what happened. Even if no one ever responded to your petitions, that is still useful information. Tell us how you used it to help organize others and build group consciousness.

USW Council Pushing for Peace in Prisons for 2018

by Countrywide Council of USW
January 2018

In recent months, the Countrywide Council of United Struggle from Within (Double C), has been discussing campaigns, tactics and strategies. One question posed by MIM(Prisons) was about the September 9 Day of Solidarity, an annual event to commemorate the Attica Rebellion of 1971 and to promote the United Front for Peace in Prisons (UFPP). So far the consensus in the Double C is that this event is an important one for promoting the UFPP.

One member told of an older comrade who has been in since 1979 who recently told em, "Thank you for waken me up to this Sept 9 day." Others agreed that the people are hungry for this message. Another Double C comrade quickly made copies of the fliers and distributed them at the library and jobsite at eir new facility where ey sees strong prospects for building anti-violence programs among lumpen groups.

In *ULK* 58, we printed a letter from the Double C to a reformist group called CURE, and laid out our strategy and guidelines for reaching out to other organizations. In recent months, Double C comrades have helped get excellent articles promoting the UFPP in two newsletters read by prisoners: *Turning the Tide* and *Propter Nos*. USW comrades should follow these examples of ways to get the line out on the UFPP, a campaign we can unite with all progressive groups on, revolutionary or not.

In writing to other organizations and newsletters, USW has goals of popularizing USW campaigns and increasing *ULK* subscribership. But we should not let these goals take us toward a strategy of sizeism. Our goal is not to get our address in as many newsletters as possible at any cost, rather we should be focused on unity and struggle. We should be building unity where we see potential for it around practical work, while struggling to push others ideologically.

Building a united front of prisoners, involving various prison-based lumpen organizations, is a long campaign that must be carried out in our daily work. September 9 is just one day when we organize a coordinated action to actualize that unity. September 9 is a time to reflect on the prison movement that came before us and on how to develop the prison movement of today and the future.

Comrades in the Double C are reviewing the September 9 Organizing Pack and existing fliers promoting the UFPP, to come up with tactics, art and slogans for further popularizing the event. This is something that all USW comrades can participate in. Starting with this issue of *ULK* we plan to print a piece of art on page 4 behind the UFPP statement that can be ripped out and copied as a flier. If you don't have access to make copies, write MIM(Prisons) for more copies of these fliers. Send in your art promoting the UFPP and September 9. Send in your slogans. Report on your organizing successes, strategies and challenges to share in the pages of *Under Lock & Key*. Build the United Front for Peace in Prisons! ★

U.S. Supreme Court: No forms? No problem.

by a Federal prisoner
January 2018

I'm writing in response to an article in *ULK* 58, "Illinois Budget Doesn't Include Due Process." The Illinois prisoner states he cannot get a grievance form from staff. The U.S. Supreme Court has addressed this issue in *Ross v. Blake* 136 S.Ct. 1850 (2016) which states "An inmate need exhaust only such administrative remedies as are available," as stated in the Prison Litigation Reform Act. The Supreme Court named three cases where this might be true:

1. "an administrative procedure is unavailable when (despite what regulations or guidance materials may promise) it operates as a simple dead end — with officers unable or consistently unwilling to provide any relief to aggrieved inmates."
2. "an administrative scheme might be so opaque that it becomes, practically speaking, incapable of use. In this situation, some mechanism exists to provide relief, but no ordinary prisoner can discern or navigate it."
3. "the same is true when prison administrators thwart inmates from taking advantage of a grievance process through machination, misrepresentation, or intimidation."

When grievance forms are not provided, prisoners need to use any available paper and write the grievance, clearly titling the form "Grievance" and explain why no official grievance form was used. Staff will either accept it or reject it. If it is rejected, get it in writing if possible. If not possible, document the date, time, location and the person rejecting the form. Include this info and/or rejection letter with the legal suit. The courts will accept this the majority of the time. If not, appeal and reference *Ross vs. Blake* from the US Supreme Court.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This is a helpful citation for reference since we know many prisons offer virtually useless grievance systems. This Supreme Court opinion should help some take their appeals beyond the non-existent appeals processes in their prisons. We are also adding this information to the cover letter that comes with petitions demanding our grievances be addressed, which we mail to prisoners upon request.

This grievance campaign is just one piece of the larger battle to demand basic rights for the millions of people locked up in jails and prisons in the United States. And these demands for basic rights need to be connected to the larger struggle against the criminal injustice system as a whole. While we might win individual battles in some cases, we will never stop the injustice until we put an end to the system. This is because prisons under imperialism aren't built to rehabilitate or reeducate people, they are built as a tool of social control. And so oppression of prisoners, and denial of their rights, is just part of the system.

Grievance Battle Tactics Updated

by a Tennessee prisoner
January 2018

[MIM(Prisons) has received some well-researched information on filing grievances and fighting the grievance system from several readers. Various court cases and rulings can be contradictory. This is in part due to local court differences, but it's also important to know when a particular decision has been overruled by a higher court. This is hard to stay on top of! We rely on our legally savvy readers to let us know when something important has changed because we don't have the money to pay lawyers to do this work for us.]

You will see in these two updates on this page some court cases that appear contradictory. We want to put this information in the hands of our jailhouse lawyers, but we caution everyone to do your own research before relying on citations for your legal work. This information is just a starting point. - Editor]

Caselaw on legal protections

The First Amendment protects the right of the people "to peaceably assemble, or to petition for a governmental redress of grievances." These rights are severely restricted in prison. Prison officials may ban prison organizations that oppose or criticize prison policies, and court decisions have generally upheld restrictions on those prisoner organizations that are permitted. There is no constitutional right to belong to a gang, or "security threat group" as prison officials often call them, and officials may impose restrictions or take disciplinary action based on gang membership.(1) In some instances courts have declared religious organizations to be security threat groups.(2) Courts have disagreed on the Constitutional status of petitions in prison. Some courts have held that they are protected by the First Amendment, while others have approved restrictions or bans on them.(3, 4) Whether prisoners can be punished for circulating or signing petitions will depend on whether prison rules give notice that such activity is forbidden.(5)

Grievances filed through an official grievance procedure are constitutionally protected(6), even though there is NO constitutional requirement that prisons or jails have a grievance system(7), or that they follow its procedures if they do have one (8), or that they issue decisions that fairly resolve prisoners' problems(9).★

We urge everyone interested in fighting to get grievances addressed to join our campaign, and use it to educate others about the injustice system. Mobilize people to do something, even if it's just mailing out a few petitions. And help them make the connections between this battle and the reason for the conditions they are fighting. Through this campaign we can build and educate for the larger fight against the imperialist system.★

1. *Westefer v. Snyder*, 422 F. 3d 575 (Segregation of gang members and their transfer to super-max prison did not violate their First Amendment rights)

2. *Fraise v. Terhune*, 283 F. 3d 506, 518-23 (3d cir. 2002) (Courts have upheld classification of The Five Percenters as a "security threat group" and the segregation of prisoners who refuse to renounce all ties with it.)

3. *Bridges v. Russell*, 757 F. 2d 1155, 1156-57 (11th cir. 1985) (Allegation of transfer in retaliation for a petition stated a claim); *Haymes v. Montanye*, 547 F. 2d 188, 191 (2d cir. 1976); *Stoval v. Bennett*, 471 F. supp. 1286, 1290 (M.D. Ala. 1979)

4. *Duamutev v. O'Keefe*, 98 F. 3d 22, 24 (2nd cir. 1996) (Holding petitions may be prohibited as long as there is a grievance process.) *Wolfe v. Morris*, 972 F. 2d 712, 716-17 (6th cir. 1992); *Nickens v. White*, 622 F. 2d 967, 971-72 (8th cir. 1980) (Upholding regulation forbidding "mass protest petitions". Noting that prisoners have alternate methods of expressing their views, i.e. correspondence and an internal grievance procedure.) *Edwards v. White* 501 F. supp. 8, 12 (M.D. Pa. 1979) (dictum - stating that a ban is permissible because the process of gathering signatures might lead to violence.)

5. *Gayle v. Gonyea*, 313 F. 3d 677, 680 n. 3 (2d cir. 2002) (Questioning whether prison rules gave notice that petitions were forbidden.) *Farid v. Goord*, 200 F. supp. 2d 220, 236 (W.D.N.Y. 2002) (Petition was constitutionally protected where no rule forbade it.) *Richardson v. Coughlin*, 763 F. supp. 1228, 1234-37 (S.D.N.Y. 1991) (Prisoner could not be punished merely for gathering signatures on a petition where prison rules did not specifically prohibit such action.)

6. *Hoskins v. Ieneary*, 395 F. 3d 372, 375 (7th cir. 2005) (per curiam); *Gayle v. Gonyea*, 313 F. 3d 677, 682 (2d cir. 2002)

7. *Lopez v. Robinson* 914 F. 2d 486, 494-95 (4th cir. 1990) (The failure to make grievance forms readily available and officers' practice of requiring inmates to tell them why they wanted the form did not violate "clearly established rights".)

8. *Wildberger v. Bracknell*, 869 F. 2d 1467 (11th cir. 1989); *Spencer v. Moore*, 638 F. supp. at 316; *Azeez v. DeRobertis*, 568 F. supp. 8, 10 (N.D. Ill. 1982); *Watts v. Morgan* 572 F. supp. 1385, 1391 (N.D. Ill 1983)

9. *Geiger v. Jowers*, 404 F. 3d 371, 374 (5th cir. 2005) (per curiam) (A prisoner does not have a federally protected liberty interest in having those grievances resolved to his satisfaction.)

How can I get free lit?

Complete labor survey on p. 21 and get writings by MIM(Prisons) on the U.S. prison economy.

Complete our level 1 study group and get *Fundamental Political Line of MIM(Prisons)* and Mao's "On Contradiction."

Discuss this issue of *ULK* with a neighbor, send in a summary of your discussion, and get back issues of *ULK*.

Only Snitches & Privileged Getting Good Time in New Folsom EOP/GP

by a California prisoner
January 2018

I've come to recognize here at California New Folsom State Prison, that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated and the condemned.

Prisoners housed at New Folsom EOP/GP mainline are being denied the right to earn good time/work time credits, and therefore can't get paroled or released. We are being denied the opportunities and support which are given to every other prisoner and at every other prison within California.

The 4th and 14th Amendment declares that "equal protection of the law" cannot and must not treat prisoners differently than others without reasonable and probable cause. People who are eligible for an earlier parole hearing under Senate Bill 260 and Senate Bill 261 pc 3051 (Youthful Parole) shall and must earn credits toward reducing time on their new parole date, not their original parole date or false reported date.

Snitches are benefiting. Lifers are getting time knocked off such as 9 to 10 years due to reasons of Prop 57. It doesn't even matter to them because they still will be labeled as lifers by the CDCR/DOC. Also those with money and/or are white have been benefiting.

Without dehumanizing or snitching or becoming SNY, we want to secure the Prop 57 rights granted us under law. We continue to struggle not to be set up and framed with charges. Many of us have caught fake cases because we've stayed silent and solid.

Please send us advice and materials so we may continue to organize.

CA USW Council Comrade Responds: The only thing I can say is that CDCr made promises that they're not living up to, once they let us all

out of SHU. I can attest to the truth of the above statement. You will get privileges if you go SNY, as I met a few people while in Ad-Seg that were going SNY so the board can release them. They're not releasing anyone who has the gang label or STG label on them.

What I can say is that anyone wanting material concerning Prop 57 can write to: Initiate Justice, PO Box 4962, Oakland, CA 94605. This is the litigation team that's fighting for the changes in the regulations so that people can get parole.

Another CA USW Council Comrade Responds: First, I don't think we should waste our time organizing around these reforms because we are not a reformist org, we are a revolutionary org. Secondly, according to Prop 57 guidelines, everyone who hasn't served a SHU term is eligible for good time/work time credits, however they are not retroactive but only go towards the remainder of one's sentence. So if you've been incarcerated for 20 years and you still have 5 years left on your sentence you will only be able to be awarded good time credits towards your remaining 5 years. As soon as Prop 57 was enacted, case records began re-calculating everyone's sentence who qualified. The entire process took about four or five months here.

Also, according to Prop 57 people who fall under any of the Youth Offender laws SB9, 260, 261 & 262 cannot receive earlier parole board dates than that which they already qualified for under the various State Bills. The only thing that changed is your MERD (Maximum Eligible Release Date). For example, under Prop 57 my MERD went from 2030 to 2028 but under SB261 my parole board date dropped from 2030 to 2021 at the soonest but no later than 2023.

For more information on Prop 57 people can write to the San Quentin Law Office which sends free legal materials to prisoners or they can contact Initiate Justice, Lifer Support Alliance and many other reformist orgs. By the way the final regulations on Prop 57 already came out and NOTHING CHANGED! But what else could we expect from CDC? Fuck reforming the system, smash it! ★

Grievance Campaign at RJDCF on Access to Showers

by a California prisoner
January 2018

This is my end-of-year report on our MIM Grievance Campaign. We did one on the "unlocks" here, and we're currently working on the issue of showers. Due to the California drought they claim that we are still in a drought and therefore can only shower on Tuesday and Thursday. Even then there is no hot water so we are showering in ICE cold water. This is in spite of the fact that we are in a medical facility and most of us are older prisoners.

The temp has dropped to 34 degrees in the morning and we have been in these conditions now for over a month. Enclosed please find the grievances.

PLC Report from Corcoran SHU

by a California prisoner
June 2017

This is my report about how the Prisoners' Legal Clinic here in the Corcoran Ad-seg/SHU is going. As a Clinic Coordinator, I've been responsible for showing inmates how to read and study the Title 15, which allows you to know what rights you have as a prisoner, and learn how to file a box. You'd be surprised to know, a lot of inmates don't understand the basics, but we've had minimal success. The accomplishments have resulted in (1) inmates getting their property in an orderly fashion, (2) getting allowable items that were granted from the hunger strikes, (3) receiving our program of yard & showers that we're being denied for lack of staff, (4) and being assigned a regular counselor to come by once a week to see if we need any assistance and making sure we get our NDS privileges (phone calls weekly or monthly & canteen draw of \$165.00 instead of \$55.00).

I've also filed a few written letters that have helped a few people get back to court, and allowed them to also be able to go to the law library once a week without having a case pending, which was the only way before. At this time we do not need any legal materials as we have enough at our disposal. This is a positive endeavor here, and this concluded my report.

MIM(Prisons) adds: The Prisoners' Legal Clinic (PLC) is a serve the people program, made up of prisoners in the United States who are fighting injustice in the anti-imperialist movement. Through the PLC, legally-savvy comrades offer legal assistance to others in their prison in exchange for some political work. And behind the scenes MIM(Prisons) provides the resources and support needed by our Clinic Coordinators.

This program helps support necessary legal struggles of prisoners while also making the connection between these struggles and our broader political organizing. Write to us for more information if you want to coordinate a Clinic where you're at. ★

Group Punishment Lockdown Continues at SUSP

by a California prisoner
January 2018

5 January 2018 – I am writing to inform our allies that D Yard here at Salinas Valley State Prison has been on lock down since 18 December 2017. The reason claimed is that "somebody stole a piece of metal." All cells have been searched and all prisoners signed papers stating that they have no knowledge of any stolen metal. Yet we still remain on lockdown even after the cops found no weapons or metal in cells or on prisoners. ★

MIM(Prisons) adds: Comrades at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility have been pursuing these issue through 602 appeals forms and subsequent appeals. After receiving a response of "partially granted" there was no actual change in conditions and they began utilizing the grievance petition for California. They have done a good job documenting the process, citing case law of *Armstrong vs. Brown* and the 8th and 14th Amendment.

Comrades in California and other states can write in to get a copy of a grievance petition to use as an organizing tool to bring people together around conditions that are not being addressed at your prison. ★

National Oppression in Prisons: Still going strong

by Soso of MIM(Prisons)
February 2018

The United States locks up New Afrikan@s at a rate more than 5 times Euro-Amerikan@s. The rate for Chican@s is at least 1.4 times higher than whites, and the way the prisons collect information on "Hispanics" makes this number likely an underestimate.(1) This dramatic over-incarceration of oppressed nations in U.S. prisons isn't new. But the huge numbers of people locked up is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the 1960s the disparity between incarceration rates was actually about the same as it is today. But the prison population was much smaller, so it impacted a lot fewer people.

In 1960, the white male incarceration rate was 262 per 100,000 white U.S. residents, and the New Afrikan male rate was 1,313. That's 5x the rate for whites. By 2010 this disparity had risen to 6x. This means New Afrikan men were six times more likely to be locked up than white men. This discrepancy had a much bigger impact in 2010 because incarceration rates skyrocketed starting in the 1970s, so that by 2010 the New Afrikan male incarceration rate was 4,347 per 100,000.(2)

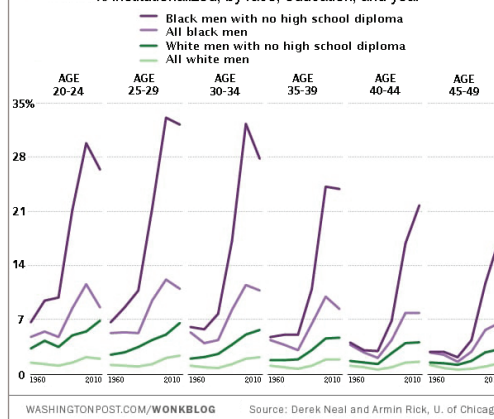
In 2000 the discrepancy in incarceration rates between New Afrikan@s and whites actually started dropping, and by 2015 it was back down to the 1960 levels. Between 2000 and 2015 the imprisonment rate of New Afrikan men dropped 24%, while at the same time the incarceration rate of white men rose slightly. Among wimmin we see the same trend but with a 50% drop for New Afrikan wimmin and a 50% increase for white wimmin.(3)

We need to put these changes in context. The incarceration rate of New Afrikan@s is still ridiculously higher than for whites! National oppression in prisons has not been eliminated, not even close. At the current rate of change, it would take until around the year 2100 to hit imprisonment equality by nation.

But we can't ignore changes like these, especially when they are consistent over a 15 year period.

Prisons are used primarily as a tool of social control by the United States government. Oppressed nations have always been a threat because of the dialectical relationship between oppressed and oppressor. And so oppressed nations face the highest incarceration rates. And the biggest targets are those who are organizing for revolutionary change, as we saw with the massive COIN-

Incarceration rates skyrocket in recent decades
% institutionalized, by race, education, and year



TELPRO operations against the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party in the 1970s.

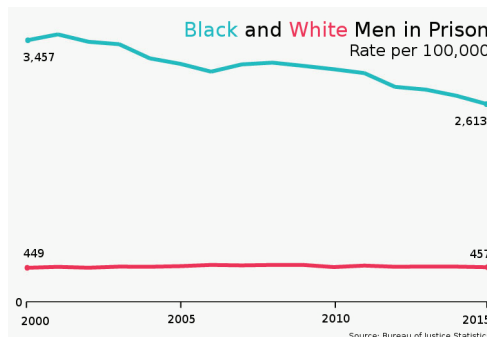
So why would the criminal injustice system shift to lowering the rate of incarceration of New Afrikan@s but not doing the same for whites? One possible explanation is that changes to the criminal injustice system have been proceeding at different rates in cities and in non-urban areas. The drop in incarcerations rates has been largely driven by lower rates in cities while imprisonment in rural areas has remained unchanged.(3) We may see these changes even out over time.

Post-emancipation proclamation, we have seen changes in national oppression in Amerikan society at various times in history. These changes generally happen in response to social movements. Reforms ranged from ending legal segregation to curtailing overt discrimination in arenas like housing, employment, and loans. But these reforms didn't actually put an end to these practices; the reality of segregation and discrimination continued, just shifted to more subtle or hidden forms. Nonetheless, we can say that in some regards conditions for oppressed nations within U.S. borders have improved. This is not surprising as the U.S. government can't really afford to have active unrest within its borders while it's fighting so many overt and proxy wars around the world. Imperialism is more stable when it can keep its home country population pacified.

In a wealthy imperialist country, the capitalists have the money to partly integrate the internal semi-colonies, buying them off with the benefits of imperialist plunder. But the national oppression is so entrenched in modern imperialist society that we don't anticipate full integration of these internal semi-colonies. And so we think it's likely the gap between white and oppressed nation incarceration rates won't come close to closing. But the current trends in incarceration rates are something to keep watching.★

Notes:

1. *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons*, The Sentencing Project, 14 June 2016.
2. *Incarceration gap widens between whites and blacks*, Pew Research Center, 6 September 2013
3. *A Mass Incarceration Mystery*, The Marshall Project, 15 December 2017.



Debating Disability Labels

by a California prisoner
January 2018

Regarding *ULK 57* and "disability." A deaf person is hearing impacted. A paralyzed person is mobility impacted. Together they are physically impacted. Their physical states are influenced by what impacted them – some ailment, incident, or birth condition.

"Disabled" and "challenged" takes something away, some quality or value of the person, as if they are the sum of their physical condition, objectified. "Disabled" in today's reactionary culture and mind-set conveys inferior, a tacit separation that, repeated ritually to and by the impacted person, becomes psychologically embedded and the person feels actually inferior – has self-doubts, is self-conscious.

I've been deaf since age 15 and could never say that I was "deaf" even, but said I had a "hearing problem." When referred to as being "deaf," I felt lower than everyone else. I've gotten over it by now, of course, at age 63, but just to say that semantic runs deep with physically and mentally impacted people, and can be a very sensitive thing. Another angle is that transgender people are considered in Western medicine to have a mental "disorder," and so on. Well, that's my 2¢. The article was rather interesting to me.

MIM(Prisons) responds: Language is an important part of culture, and something that revolutionaries have a responsibility to use for political purpose. So we appreciate this comrade raising criticisms of our use of language in *ULK 57*.

As a launching off point in this discussion, we will bring up our use of the word *Chican@*. We use an @ symbol instead of an 'o' or 'a' to convey multiple political points: the @ is not gender-specific; the term is encompassing an oppressed nation and explicitly rejecting Amerikan labels like "Hispanic."

With that in mind we want to look carefully at

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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.

STUDY TO GROW AND WIN!

Depth of political understanding is one of the factors that will determine whether we win our struggle against oppression and imperialism. We need to organize, and we need to be sure we're organizing with maximum results and correct goals. Everyone's political level must be raised!

CORRESPONDENCE STUDY COURSES

The introductory study group studies a couple essays on prison economics in level 1, and some basics on Maoism in level 2. Graduates can go on to join our University of Maoist Thought, which studies more advanced material. We encourage prisoner-led study groups to also participate in our correspondence study groups! Write in to sign up and get more info.

★ NEW COURSE ★ FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MAOIST THOUGHT ON THE INTERNAL SEMI-COLONY OF AZTLÁN

As part of the campaign to re-unify Aztlán, comrades will be offering an ongoing course on the study of national liberation struggles in the United States and the building of a proletarian-led movement in Aztlán. The course will focus on prison-based organizing and building unity from the inside out. This course is open to all U.S.

prisoners who are part of the Chicana liberation movement and who have completed level 1 of the intro study group offered by MIM(Prisons). The first study session will begin in Spring 2018. To enroll, write to:

UMT: Aztlán
PO Box 40799
San Francisco, CA 94140

USW STUDY GROUPS

MIM(Prisons) supports USW-led study groups by sending in books and study packs. Start by studying this issue of *ULK* with someone. Tell us what questions came up in your study, and what topics you want to study next. If you keep us updated on your group's progress, we'll keep sending you study material.

FREE POLITICAL BOOKS

We mail out political theory and history books, magazines, and study packs in exchange for political work or money. Our library includes a wide variety of topics, from economics to organizing strategy to philosophy – what you'd need to know to wage a successful struggle against imperialism and all forms of oppression! See page 2 for more on how to get free books.

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...Disability

this term "disability" to consider these criticisms. We do not want to suggest that someone who cannot hear or cannot see is inferior to someone who can. All people have different abilities. Some of these abilities can be trained, but some are things we're born with. Some people, for instance, are stronger than others. The weaker folks aren't inferior, but they might be better suited to tasks that don't require as much physical strength.

This was discussed in the book *Philosophy is No Mystery* which describes struggles in a village in revolutionary China. One of the challenges they faced was strong young men acting as if their work was more valuable than that of weaker folks (mostly wimmin, but also elderly people and children). However, upon deeper discussion everyone came to agree that the work done by all was critical to their success, and valuing strength over other types of labor was counter-productive.

Let's address the question of whether the term "disability" is similar to saying a transgendered persyn has a "disorder." Transgender folks are often said to have "gender dysphoria" which is the stress a persyn feels as a result of the sex they were assigned at birth. The assigned sex does not match the persyn's internal identity. That's a situation some transgender people seek to address by changing their physical body to match their internal identity. Transgender folks face a difficult situation that needs resolving for them to lead healthy and happy lives.

It's true that when we hear "disability" we generally think of things we would want to fix. But is that a bad thing? When people have vision problems that can be corrected, we want to use medi-

cal science to correct them. For instance, removal of cataracts cures blindness in many people. Similarly, if someone is missing a leg, getting fitted with a prosthesis is often a very good thing. In these situations someone lacks the ability to use a part of their body to its full potential. And in some cases this ability can be restored.

So perhaps the analogy we would make is that missing a leg is like someone being assigned a sex that doesn't match their internal identity. The gender dysphoria they experience before transitioning is like lacking a prosthesis for someone without a leg. Making the transition to a sex or gender expression that matches their identity is for many transgender people somewhat analogous to people with physical disabilities getting them surgically or prosthetically corrected. If we can resolve gender dysphoria, by changing society or improving the persyn's individual situation, we should do that. Just like if we can provide prosthetic limbs and cataract surgery, we should do that.

Where using the term "disability" becomes more complex and muddy is in cases where the persyn impacted doesn't want to make a change. There are some good examples of this, like neuro-atypical folks who have developed highly specialized skills because of their neurology, but struggle to socialize or interact with other people. Some argue this is not something to be fixed but is just a humyn difference. And so we shouldn't call that a disability, but rather just a different ability. However, in the types of cases that were discussed in the issue of *ULK* in question, the ailments and physical limitations are things we all agree should be fixed if possible. We don't see anyone arguing that keeping cataracts help people in any way.

UFPP in Connecticut

by a Connecticut prisoner
November 2017

Peace: I believe in order to have true peace among prisoners we must first war with ourselves and conquer the oppressor's mentality that divides us; unify for a common cause and subdue the petty issues that divide us.

Unity: We must come together and collectively make sound decisions and be willing to do anything to be about our goals; we need education, skills, jobs, housing upon leaving jails; we must realize that the beasts will never rehabilitate us. It's counter-productive to our cause. United we must stand or continue to fall one by one.

Growth: We must stop degrading and persecuting our fellow convicts; snitch, sex offender, thugs, etc. is all victim of a system that is designed to lock us up and throw away the keys; it's not justice, it's just us, poor, uneducated, addicts or dawks trying to eat from the master's table.

Internationalism: All oppressed people around the globe must unite and struggle for the same cause, strive to liberate and eradicate any and all who abuse any people for race, color, status, etc. Earth has too much wealth for any human being to go hungry or without housing or medication and treatment; we must fight within and outside the system to make it better; destroy in order to build.

Independence: We must unite and unite our community; vote and become police officer, judges, etc. Enough of singing "we shall overcome," and lighting candles and talking; the youth should stop waiting for a leader and strive to become one, that way the system can't kill the head to stop the body.

This is a brief description of United Front for Peace in Prisons (UFPP) motto and what it means to us. We don't have much, very little or no money. We are rich in spirit and strive to be soldiers of united front. We call ourselves soldier of war, for it's a daily battle.

MIM(Prisons) responds: These comrades in Connecticut have taken up organizing in that state

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The question here is whether we can distinguish between conditions that people don't want to change, differences between humyns, and conditions that people can generally agree we should change if possible. If we can, the term "disability" may be appropriate for the category of conditions we would change if possible. And then the final question we must answer is whether the term "disability" in our social context implies that someone is inferior. As we've already said above, we want to use language to empower and build revolutionary culture. This last point is the most difficult one and we'd like to solicit input from other readers, and especially those who contributed to *ULK* 57. Send us your thoughts on this topic and we will study it further and publish something in an upcoming issue of *Under Lock & Key*.★

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...Successes

Upon seeing me, he called me a "bitch," which I immediately wrote up. This time, there happened to be a Major that did not put up with officer harassment and retaliation, and he immediately got both of us in his office and made the officer apologize to me and promise to leave me alone. I was falsely charged with several disciplinary infractions after I filed a grievance against an officer for calling me a "black son of a bitch," back in January of this year. When I refused to drop my complaint, I received a major disciplinary for being "out of place" (not attending a law library session, which is voluntary).

A couple of months later, I received another major case for "failure to obey an order" (another trumped up charge) and after being found guilty of it, I was stripped of my general population status and re-assigned to G-4 (medium custody). The whole purpose of charging me with the major infractions were to 1) get me transferred from the unit and 2) discredit me so that my complaint against the officer for use of slurs/hostile epithets could be viewed as a lie against that officer. I was shipped off of the unit and all attempts to have something done to the officer who called me a black son of a bitch were ditched.

After arriving here on this unit to be locked away for 6 months on medium custody, one of the ladies who was part of my Unit Classification Committee (UCC), disagreed that I should be classified as medium custody, because the charges were weak. Now I am hoping that the two major infractions that I received earlier this year have no bearing on whether I make parole. There are NOT a lot of guys who are willing to stand up for their rights like me. I recently wrote a letter to Senator John Whitmire, informing him of the issues we are plagued with over here at this century-old unit. Just last week, we had not one, not two, but several pipes burst, leaving us without clean water to drink. Half of the building had NO WATER to flush their toilets, and there were restrictions on showering.

I'm continuing in my fight to bring attention to all of the ruthless officers that continue to oppress us behind these walls. Please let me know what I can do to help your cause. I am indigent, but I'm able to write and get things out.

I'm sure you all know that as of September 2017, solitary confinement in TDCJ was abolished. The inmates at the Pack Unit in Navasoto, Texas found help with the heat during the summer by way of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals when they affirmed class certification. Judge Keith Ellison ordered TDCJ to put air conditioning in the Pack Unit, which was found to be a "hot box" to the inmates housed there. Instead of putting air conditioning in housing areas, TDCJ shipped the inmates to cooler quarters in other facilities. The reaffirmed class certification paves the way for inmates' lawyers to try and win a permanent injunction.

Also, inmates throughout TDCJ have won the right to wear 4-inch beards, and Muslim offenders are supposed to be able to wear their kufis all over

the unit, yet state officials are trying to stonewall us (yes, I am Muslim) from doing it. Now, I've heard that on some of the more hardened units, officials would rather allow the wearing of kufis rather than risk any type of rebellion. The unit I'm on is NOT one of them, yet I'm working to get some type of wording on WHY we aren't being allowed to wear them here. The case citing is *Ali vs Stephens*, 822 F.3d 776 (5th Cir. 2016) U.S. App LEXIS 7964. Until next time, stay strong.

MIM(Prisons) responds: There are a number of seasoned comrades in Texas fighting and winning, in spite of harassment and retaliation from TDCJ staff and admin. We encourage others to look to this comrade's work for an example ofeir bravery, dedication, and successes!

The Texas Pack that MIM(Prisons) distributes is a good jumping off point for people who need basic information on filing grievances and fighting against some of the most common things prison staff do to take advantage of us. Most of the information in the Texas Pack ought to be in the law library by any reasonable standard, and even TDCJ's own policies and procedures. Since the TDCJ isn't follow-



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...UFPP CT

and we're very happy to be working with them. We want to expand on the point of Independence. We agree that we need the oppressed to become leaders, and ultimately this will include playing all the important roles in society. However, getting oppressed into positions in the police force and elsewhere in the criminal injustice system today won't change anything. It will just put a few more dark faces on a white system of national oppression. True independence isn't putting a few formerly oppressed people in positions to serve the system. True independence is taking over the system so that the oppressed are running it in the interests of the oppressed. "Destroy in order to build," as this comrade says. At that time the police and judges will serve the people and not the oppressors, and we will fill those roles with people from the oppressed community.

In 2011 comrades from United Struggle from Within and several other organizations put out a call for United Front for Peace in Prisons. In part they wrote:

"We fully recognize that whether we are conscious of it or not, we are already 'united' — in our suffering and our daily repression. We face the same common enemy. We are trapped in the same oppressive conditions. We wear the same prison clothes, we go to the same hellhole box (isolation), we get brutalized by the same racist pigs. We are one people, no matter your hood, set

ing its own rules, and not informing prisoners of what those rules are and the process to have them enforced, we have compiled this information. Send a \$2.50 donation to our address on page 1, or a contribution for ULK, to get the Texas Pack.

Another aspect of this author's experience that we want to draw attention to is how eir work impacts the quality of life of other prisoners on eir unit. Getting a guard kicked off the unit, suspended, or being told to tone down eir harassment, serves not only this author but also the prisoners around em. Same goes for the impact of lawsuits (for better or worse). So if you're reading this and a guard isn't harassing you, know that it's probably because of all the people who have fought on your behalf ahead of you. Maybe now it's time to start contributing to help others! ★

or nationality. We know 'we need unity' — but unity of a different type from the unity we have at present. We want to move from a unity in oppression to unity in serving the people and striving toward national independence.

"We cannot wish peace into reality when conditions do not allow for it. When people's needs aren't met, there can be no peace. Despite its vast wealth, the system of imperialism chooses profit over meeting humyn needs for the world's majority. Even here in the richest country in the world there are groups that suffer from the drive for profit. We must build independent institutions to combat the problems plaguing the oppressed populations. This is our unity in action."

"We acknowledge that the greater the unity politically and ideologically, the greater our movement becomes in combating national oppression, class oppression, racism and gender oppression. Those who recognize this reality have come together to sign these principles for a united front to demonstrate our agreement on these issues. We are the voiceless and we have a right and a duty to be heard."

The UFPP sets out five principles: Peace, Unity, Growth, Internationalism and Independence. If you have a group interested in joining the United Front for Peace in Prisons, send us your organization's name and a statement of unity explaining what the united front principles mean to your organization. And tell us how you're building peace where you're at. ★

Pennsylvania Drug Situation is a Call to Unity

by a Pennsylvania prisoner
January 2018

I am currently incarcerated in Pennsylvania at the State Correctional Institution: Chester. And every day as I look around this place I'm forced to live in, all I see is a growing number of "synthetic snaps." When I first came to state prison in 2006 drugs were an issue but not like they are today. These new cheaper, and more easily obtainable synthetic drugs such as suboxone or subutex and K-2 synthetic marijuana, are making prison society worse and more depressing than ever. These subs cause withdrawal symptoms like heroin and are causing convicts to throw away their solidarity to scumbag each other in pursuit of their next fix.

Suboxone strips are flat and very easy to smuggle into prisons. They can sell for up to \$100 apiece wholesale which is like a 10,000% profit which is irresistible to most "hustlers."

This new opiate replacement has prisons in an uproar. Convicts are stealing from and robbing each other to get just a little "piece" to chase away their withdrawal symptoms. And our RHUs are filled with "protective custody" inmates who ran up drug debts on credit that they couldn't cover.

Then we have the so-called "synthetic mari-

juana" product K-2. I was an avid marijuana smoker on the streets and this stuff is way different than blowing a sack of loud. K-2 can cause violent outbursts, passing out, seizures, suicide attempts, and serious mental breakdowns. I have seen people attempt to fly over the fence earning them escape charges. People lose touch with reality and lash out at everyone around them. Guys pass out standing up, cracking their heads open, and to top it off a guy on my block at SCI: Somerset went all zombie on his celly biting him on his face and arms. This stuff is more like bad PCP than marijuana. It just blows my mind that synthetics are causing more problems than their "real" counterparts.

We as a united front against the injustice system need to stop trying to capitalize off the downfall of our comrades, and utilize our efforts to solidify our ranks against our oppressors. The rapper Meek Millz is a prisoner here at Chester with me and has stated that even growing up on the drug-laden streets of Philadelphia he couldn't imagine a cell block in prison so closely resembling a drug block in the badlands of his home city. We can't continue to give the oppressors more ammo to use against us. I understand that boredom, hopelessness, and other forms of incarceration depression tend to drive us to find ways to numb us. But let's try to come together and help our comrades strive

to kick habits they have already acquired, and to prevent anyone from picking one up.

This is just another battle we need to unite to win. Whether you're White, Black, or Hispanic, Crip, Blood, Latin, or Aryan, come together for the greater good of convicts everywhere. Pay attention, comrades, because Amerikkka wants to catch us slippin'.

MIM(Prisons) responds: In the November issue of *Under Lock & Key* we got deep into the issue of drugs in prison. All writers agreed it's a big problem, though what is used and how the problem plays out varies from state to state and even within each prison. And a lot of folks came to the same conclusion as this comrade: we need to stop trying to make money off the suffering of others and instead come together against the injustice system. This letter is a good follow-up to that issue of *ULK* because we need to keep this topic front and center as we work to find ways to help people kick the habit and join the revolutionary movement.

Are you helping comrades kick their drug habits? What methods and tactics are you using? What have you tried that didn't work, and why? What harm reduction tactics can we try to employ? What about counseling techniques? The State isn't going to fix this problem for us. We need to make our own interventions and support systems.★

Fixing Insulin Indifference

by a Georgia prisoner
November 2017

The enclosed letter is submitted to you for follow-up to "Insulin Indifference Disables Prisoners." (*ULK* 57, p. 6) The publishing editor of that letter omitted the solution to that problem. Does anyone have time to comment on if mine compares to the grievance guides presently available? Or is my method in conflict with the advice in other manuals? I want to know how I compare with other grievance methods.

The problem in the article is a policy of no lunchtime fingersticks/insulin injections. The prison serves lunch so late it is outside the timeframe that a pre-breakfast shot of 70/30 insulin works for some diabetics within the prison.

For diabetics having this problem, immediately following lunch they may have symptoms of extremely elevated glucose, like hunger (even though they have just ate lunch), blurry vision, dry mouth, thirst, pins and needles (like tingling nerve pain), and frequent urination. In addition, at next fingerstick before supper their glucose may be extremely elevated.

"Extremely elevated" blood sugar is dangerous because it "can cause life threatening changes in the body within a matter of hours. An extremely high blood sugar level... And I am talking at least 300... can cause an imbalance in the delicate acid-based structure in the tissues of the body."(1)

So if you take 70/30 insulin (and your prison doesn't do lunchtime fingersticks/insulin injec-

tions) and you have the above symptoms, and/or if your supertime glucose level is still over 300 several hours after lunch, then you should first try a medical request. Then, if necessary, a grievance explaining the problem. If filing a grievance (the formal step), then include the illustration of how extremely elevated glucose harms the body, located in the last paragraph of "Insulin Indifference Disables Prisoners." This way the warden, or other prison officials signing off on the grievance, cannot claim they were unaware of the damage that was occurring due to that they "are not medical professionals." (This is a popular excuse used by non-medical prison officials to escape liability in prison medical care cases.)

Two solutions to the problem are: 1. For the prison to start serving lunch earlier, or 2. For the prison to start providing lunchtime fingerstick/insulin injection, at which time you should receive a small dose of regular-type insulin, also called "mealtime insulin." Immediately following these two suggested solutions on your grievance, you should write "To do neither would constitute deliberate indifference."

In your medical request or your grievance, you should also explain that staff should periodically adjust your new lunchtime dose of regular insulin to determine exactly what amount is required to lower the residual glucose from lunch so it is at least somewhere between 200 - 300 by supertime fingerstick. This will keep your glucose out of the danger zone between lunch and supper.

Note:

1. Jorge E. Rodriguez, MD, *Diabetics Solution*, p. 54.

MIM(Prisons) responds: The problem with timing insulin injections with mealtimes is not lack of education or medical expertise. The problem of indifference is built in to the capitalist, white supremacist power structure. Imprisoned people, and oppressed nations in general, are not thought to need or deserve to have access to proper medical care. Prisoners' right to their eyesight or to keep all their toes is of absolutely no concern to the imperialist power structure. In fact, from the imperialist system's perspective it is probably better for prisoners and oppressed nation people to continue suffering, and be kept busy filing grievances. That way it's even harder to fight back.

We're glad this author wrote in with more details on what people could do to resolve the individual problems they are having with administration's approach to diabetes management. If we're talking about real remedies, though, and about fixing a problem, we need to acknowledge that capitalism and national oppression are the real cause of extremely elevated glucose levels. We need to struggle on our individual problems so we can be stronger for our revolutionary work. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture!★

★ ★ ★ ★
**See partial political
glossary p. 23**
Send \$3 to MIM(Prisons)
for a full political glossary

Rehabilitation Must Push People to Their Fullest Potential

by an Arkansas prisoner
October 2017

Seven out of every ten parolees will be arrested sometime after their release. Nearly half will return to prison someday. The plague of recidivism hangs over every releasee's future like the scythe of the grim reaper coming to cut short their potential beyond the concrete walls, iron bars, and razor-wire of the perpetually proliferating injustice system. The very dehumanizing experience of imprisonment itself plays a significant role in criminal conditioning. For many, it is the influencing factor of imprisonment that detrimentally affects them the greatest. Many learn from those mistakes of their past and some don't. For those with the ability to endure the physical and psychological terrors of "doing time," the lack of skills acquired while imprisoned leaves them with few options other than crime for economic survival after release and leaves the parole board wondering whether or not it made the right decision in granting parole in the first place.

More often than not, it is overlooked as to what may have led to someone's imprisonment and what may be done to help them overcome the struggles or obstacles in their path and in order for them to have a successful reintegration into society. The feeling of defeat is often a temporary condition, but there is never a better measure of what a person is than when they're absolutely free to choose. Removing the individual's choice leads to a lack of inspiration and motivation to overcome one's struggles, and they eventually give up hope. Giving up is what makes the temporary condition of defeat permanent. Treat a man as he is, and he will remain as he is; treat a man as he can and should be, and he will become as he can and should be.

In prisons the use of manual labor is considered by several states to be rehabilitative for those given the duty of performing labor that could be done by an advancement in technology through farming equipment. In all actuality, this manual labor is of no use to the prisoner and further hinders true rehabilitation. More money is put into prisons, county jails, and other state penal institutions than there is put into the actual rehabilitation of the prisoners. The addition of more educational programs throughout the state penal institutions would serve a greater good and present people with more opportunities for a successful reintegration into society. "Hoe squad" and "regional maintenance" are a hindrance to the efforts to rehabilitate criminal behavior and thinking modification efforts of the individual prisoners.

Forcing a prisoner to perform such tasks of manual farming and regional clean-up, and without an incentive for possible job placement upon release, serves no greater purpose to the individual prisoner and proves to be more dehumanizing than rehabilitative. It has been declared by many that we can change our circumstances by a mere change of our attitudes, but when placed under duress with no choice in the matter there becomes no room for progress. In regards to rehabilitation, it should and must be the objective of our state government

and legislature to seek out better avenues by which to lower our states' recidivism rates, and use education as an avenue by which to rehabilitate our states' prisoners. The person everyone wants returning to their community is an educated, empowered taxpayer who has the skills to help make our society safe and healthy.

As an ex-convict, I understand the limitations placed on our states' prison populations by the use of "hoe squad" and "regional maintenance" as a form of rehabilitation. The value of post-secondary correctional education programs prove to be very beneficial. As this article is written, I am in progress of putting together business plans for an outreach program entitled "A New Leaf Outreach Program" aka "My Brothers' Place" that will serve as an avenue by which convicts / ex-convicts and parolees / probationers, as well as the community, may come together and organize our knowledge – not denying one another the opportunity to teach what we know and learn what we may not know – and bring about a solution to our society's problems.

One may choose to be a part of the problem or choose to be a part of the solution. Once you are challenged, you find something in yourself. Adversity causes some men to break, others to break records. Success is based upon how one rises above defeats.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This writer explains well the importance of education for prisoners and the uselessness of many of the "jobs" programs that currently exist. This failure of the work programs is specific to the criminal injustice system that seeks to control populations rather than educate and rehabilitate.

In communist China under Mao we have examples of prisons where people were sent for genuine rehabilitation and education. These prisons integrated work programs for the prisoners, to help them contribute productive labor to a socialist society and learn skills they might use on the outside. When prisoners were released in China it was after undergoing intensive education, which included reading many books and discussing these books with others. This process of study and criticism/self-criticism helped them see why their actions that harmed other people were wrong, and gave them a sense of purpose to their lives that did not involve harming others.

All of this occurred within the greater context of a society where everyone was given a role, and expected to participate in transforming society. We can't expect the imperialists to implement such a progressive system because it would be counter to their use of prisons for social control and impossible in a capitalist dog-eat-dog society. But we can, as this writer says, build together to be part of the solution. We can build our own educational programs, study groups, and organizations independent of the oppressor. This is our job right now, as we build to ultimately take down this corrupt and unjust system. ★

Advancing the Struggle Outside: Redefining Crime

by a Colorado prisoner
January 2018

"As did witch hunters in the past do we still have 'criminal' scapegoats?" This is a good question but a better one to ask is "are we still sometimes misled by authorities who define crime in their own interests or out of ignorance, as authorities did in dealing with witchcraft?" (1) For those conscious of being oppressed this isn't a hypothetical, but an actual problem to be solved. Even those unconscious of the political situation, living in the barrios, this is an everyday problem; it is reality. The problem turns on what is "criminal" and who should define "crime"?

Nobody doubts that poverty, lack of legitimate opportunities and such in the barrio leads people to alternative methods of survival, which the system has declared criminal. Consider this: a brown boy grows up in a violent, poverty-stricken barrio. He is denied most, if not all, "socially appropriate" methods/means for success (e.g., role models to learn from, positive environment, good education, adequate employment opportunities). Without access to approved avenues for social survival – yet still held to society's expectations – our brown boy turns to alternative means and learns the perils of the injustice system. Is it criminal that he turned to the only obvious option available? Or is it criminal that capitalists have attempted to make that his only option?

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MS DOC Commissioner Turns a Blind Eye

by a Mississippi prisoner
December 2017

Many prisoners have utilized the petition demanding their grievances be heard. The Commissioner simply forwarded the grievances to the person in charge of the grievance system, who wrote a letter to each prisoner that filed a petition. The letter informed the prisoners that they should file a grievance about the issue if they had a problem with the grievance system. Absurd, but true.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We responded to this comrade asking what they think should be done next to resolve this problem. Clearly, writing grievances isn't working. Writing to the Commissioner gets no results. Lawsuits can give some relief, but often only temporarily. And of course lawsuit victories come with the problem of enforcement.

Ultimately we believe we need to completely change our society in order to fix this problem. We try to contribute to lawsuits, but even more importantly we contribute to education and institution-building, so when our lawsuits fail we can still make progress in our struggle to a more just humynity. ★

Aztlán Realism Book Release

by MIM(Prisons)
November 2017

Aztlán Realism:
Revolutionary Art from Pelican Bay S.H.U.
Jose Villarreal
Aztlán Press
PO Box 4186
San Jose, CA 95150
2017, 214 pgs., soft cover, \$50

Aztlán Realism is over 200 pages of revolutionary Chican@ artwork, straight from the hole. The pages are in black and white, and select pieces are shown in color in the front and back. It is easy to get lost in the pages of this book, imagining a different world, and clearly envisioning what it will be like to fight to get there.

The line in the artwork is on point. Lumpen (prisoners and gangsters) and peasants are shown working in unity to smash capitalism and national oppression. The Third Worldist line is prominent throughout: Aztlán is depicted in unity with oppressed nations globally, against Amerikkka and imperialism in general.

There is very strong revolutionary feminism in *Aztlán Realism*. Wimmin are shown on the

front lines, and as the backbone, of Chican@ liberation. While the drawings containing wimmin in a revolutionary context far outnumber the scantily-clad and coy-faced Chicanas, we would choose to omit the sexy drawings altogether if we had the option. They're a direct reflection of the gendered culture we currently live in, and glorification of brown rather than white wimmin should not require objectification of bodies.

The only other thing we would change about this book would be to see the whole book printed in color. Villarreal's use of color adds vibrancy to the artwork which is very compelling.

We strongly recommend getting your hands on this book, or just reaching out to Aztlán Press to show some love. Aztlán Press aims to publish the works of imprisoned Chican@ writers, and we look forward to watching them develop over the years to come.★



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...Crime

The United States has an injustice system which focuses on the actions of an individual, not on the reason, motivation, or purpose. To address this failing and irradiate it, those caught up in the vicious cycle must rise up. Our communities must also join in the necessary revolution for hope of success. Activism on a proactive level is needed. We cannot be liberal-minded (reforming without making substantive changes to the system structure) in our objectives. Changing only definitions ignores the problem, which is the process itself. Reform of existing systems is equal to affirming their correctness but asserting that some fine-tuning is needed. Such is not the case.

A quantifiable and qualitative change is necessary which cannot be accomplished within the current system.(2) We, the people, must construct independent resources and systems if we are ever to supplant capitalism and its inherent inequality. In pursuit of this, our community members must connect with prisoners (current and former), coordinating and cooperating, building and spreading consciousness, correct political views, theory, practice and support for the movimiento.

One's actions cannot be labeled criminal if those are the only options made available. Today our communities generally face an alternative of evils: spend one's life struggling within a system meant to keep us outside the power structure, never progressing, or refuse to be subjugated and be labeled criminal. The choice is between a slow and torturous death and surviving by "crime." Those not faced with this drastic choice of evils cannot rightfully say what is and is not criminal.

"Law provides the baseline for formal social

Censors in Their Own Words – January 2018

by MIM(Prisons)
January 2018

U\$. imperialist leaders and their labor aristocracy supporters like to criticize other countries for their tight control of the media and other avenues of speech. For instance, many have heard the myths about communist China forcing everyone to think and speak alike. In reality, these stories are a form of censorship of the truth in the United States. In China under Mao the government encouraged people to put up posters debating every aspect of

control. Criminalization of behaviors is a political process..."(3) The first steps towards changing this political process – the arbitrariness of labeling procedures – is to correct the criterion of what constitutes crime. From there, remove those who have contributed to labeling criminality and re-educating them as communists did in China during the 1950s.(4) Pressure from below provoking pressure from above to induce meaningful change.(5) Supplanting capitalism is a marathon not a mile-long race. Every stage must be approached and accomplished with care and attention. We revolutionaries must be methodical, concise and avoid impertinence. Success will come, just not overnight.★

Notes:

1. *Criminology: Explaining Crime and its Context*, Stephen E. Brown, Finn-Sage Esbensen, Gilbert, Geis; Chapter 5.
2. *ULK No 52, Sept/Oct 2016 "Approaching Conflict More Scientifically," California Prisoner.*
3. *Criminology*, Chapter 2.
4. *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, Mao Tse-Tung.
5. *Criminology*, Chapter 7.

political life, to criticize their leaders, and to engage in debate at work and at home. This was an important part of the Cultural Revolution in China. There are a number of books available that give a truthful account, but far more money is put into anti-communist propaganda. Here, free speech is reserved for those with money and power.

In prisons in particular we see so much censorship, especially targeting those who are politically conscious and fighting for their rights. Fighting for our First Amendment right to free speech is a battle that MIM(Prisons) and many of our subscribers waste a lot of time and money on. For us this is perhaps the most fundamental of requirements for our organizing work. There are prisoners, and some entire facilities (and sometimes entire states) that are denied all mail from MIM(Prisons). This means we can't send in our newsletter, or study materials, or even a guide to fighting censorship. Many prisons regularly censor *ULK* claiming that the news and information printed within is a "threat to security." For them, printing the truth about what goes on behind bars is dangerous. But if we had the resources to take these cases to court we believe we could win in many cases.

Denying prisoners mail is condemning some people to no contact with the outside world. To highlight this, and the ridiculous and illegal reasons that prisons use to justify this censorship, we will periodically print a summary of some recent censorship incidents in *ULK*.

We hope that lawyers, paralegals, and those with some legal knowledge will be inspired to get

Continued on next page...

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...Censors

involved and help with these censorship battles, both behind bars and on the streets. For the full list of censorship incidents, along with copies of appeals and letters from the prison, check out our censorship reporting webpage at www.prisoncensorship.info/data

Florida

Following up on our protest letters over the censorship of ULK 58, Dean Peterson, Library Services Administrator for the Florida DOC responded:

"The issue in question was impounded and the impoundment was subsequently reviewed by the Literature Review Committee on 11/15/2017, at which time the issue was rejected. This means it will not be allowed into any of our institutions. The stated reason was Florida Administrative Code (FAC) Ch. 33-501.401(3)(m), which states: 'It otherwise presents a threat to the security, order or rehabilitative objectives of the correctional system or the safety of any person.'"

Peterson went on to quote the mail rules on how publishers can obtain an independent review. But did not bother to respond to any of our arguments in our previous request for a review of this decision.

Florida - Charlotte Correctional Institution

In response to a grievance filed by a prisoner regarding lack of notification of censorship of eir ULK, P. Vartiainen of the mail room wrote:

"If a publication is impounded or rejected, a notice will be given to you. Every issue of Lock & Key has been rejected by the State since January 2014. Notices have been given to all subscribers. There is no record of you subscribing to this publication. Your informal grievance is DENIED."

Washington - Clallam Bay Correctional Facility

CBCC rejected ULK 59 "pending review" because it

"Contains articles and information on drugs in prisons and the cost comparison of inside and outside of prison as well as movement of drugs."

Not sure how that at all relates to the penological interests of the institution.

Washington - Stafford Creek Correction Center

A subscriber was given an official rejection notice, stating "Incoming newsletter containing indepth information on the drug problems and values of drugs within the correctional setting which is a security issue." (Vol. 59 pg1.4-7, 16 -- File No. 18346) What is the security issue...?

Michigan - Marquette Branch Prison

"Under Lock & Key #59 will be rejected because the articles contain information about criminal activity that could promote uprisings, unrest and disruption within this facility. The entire publication has a 'revolutionary, protest, uprising' theme. There is also red ink on the back page that will be rejected because it cannot be searched thoroughly."

ULK readers know we do not print anything in colored ink, so red ink (if it really was there) is either from the post office or the mail room. Additionally, political or revolutionary content is illegal as grounds for censorship going all the way back to *Thornburgh v. Abbott*, 490 U.S. 401.

Continued on page 24...

New Survey on Prisoner Labor

In 2009 we printed an issue of *Under Lock & Key* about labor in Amerikan prisons. Since that time many people have written to tell us that our analysis is out of date, or that it doesn't apply to the labor situation in their particular state. We're undertaking a new analysis of prisoner work for ULK 62 and we need your help. **Return this survey by MAY 1st** to contribute to this research. Each survey respondent will be sent a collection of essays by MIM(Prisons) on the U.\$. Prison Economy.

1. What state and facility is this information about? (If writing about more than one facility, submit a separate survey for each.)
2. Out of the whole prisoner population, what percentage has jobs?
3. What percentage of people work in each job category? (should add up to 100%)
 - a. manufacturing (making products for sale)
 - b. agriculture (growing food)
 - c. prison maintenance (janitorial, cooking, etc.)
 - d. other (explain what the jobs are)
4. What happens to the products from category a. manufacturing and b. agriculture after they are produced? Who is it sold to or used by?
5. What are these workers paid (if anything)? If it's different by job please report each job separately. If they are not paid, do they get some other reward (i.e. good time credits)?
6. Who are they working for? If some are for private companies and some are for the prison itself, please tell us how many in each category.
7. How many hours per week do people typically work?

For Liberty and Equality

by a Texas prisoner

Men form groups for wealth and power
Waging wars to feed their greed
Countless masses they devour
Causing world-wide misery
Turning free men into slaves
Starving children meet their graves
Yet the world is not amazed
Not many seek to make a change
The ruling class enslaves the masses
Dark-complexion people suffer
Socio-economic madness
All the world chaotic, tragic

Worn the shackles much too long
Too much time locked in the cage
All has turned to hate and rage
No longer will I be a slave
Spent my hours lost in pages
Of the books that educate
Any mind that seeks the answers
And the mind to liberate
The people of the planet suffer
All is in the name of greed
But it's time to make a difference
No more shall I be deceived

The ruling class are merely men
Like you and I they cry and bleed
They're also prone to make mistakes
And they can fail like they succeed
The rulers are all small in number
We are their real source of power
Let us liberate ourselves
Unite so all alive are free
Snatch the kingdom from the kings
Throw the tyrants off their thrones
For liberty and equality ★

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.\$. citizens are criminals – accomplices and accessories to the crimes of U.\$. oppression globally until the day U.\$. imperialism is overcome. All U.\$. 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.

¡Reunificar Aztlán!

por Pilli de Republic of Aztlán
traducido por Lucio Cabanas de USW
Septiembre 2017

Aprendiendo la diferencia entre nuestros amigos y enemigos significa que nosotros sabemos que otros prisioneros comparten más en común con nosotros que lo contrario. Esto también significa que dentro de la nación de uno, las formaciones dentro tienen aun más en común que lo contrario.

Para el Aztlán encarcelado, las divisiones fueron últimamente inspiradas en el imperio. El ala avanzada del Aztlán encarcelado entiende que es tiempo de re-unificar a Aztlán.

En Califaztlan, norteño, sureño, EME, NF han sido paredes que separaban. A veces cada formación era necesaria por seguridad, y algunas formaciones pueden ser más progresivas que otras. Pero estas formaciones todavía separan al Aztlán encarcelado. La separación de una nación no es buena bajo ninguna circunstancia. Yo creo que la meta de todas estas organizaciones Lumpen (LO) es la unificación en algún punto, pero ¿cómo puede esto ser posible?

Un Vistazo futuro a un Aztlán Unificado

Es una realidad que se ha desarrollado mucha

La verdad es que mientras los LO (ej. NF, EME) todavía tengan formaciones norteñas y sure-

Chican@ Power and the Struggle for Aztlán

by a MIM(Prisons) Study Group

Chican@ Power is an invaluable resource for anyone struggling for liberation of the internal semi-colonies of the United States. We are sending it out with study questions for use in your study group or individual study. We compiled answers to these study questions into a study pack, which can be sent to you after you've read the book, or if the book is censored.

A comrade is planning to run a study group on the book in the near future - don't miss it!

The book costs \$22.95 + s/h (\$10 for prisoners). We're asking anyone who can contribute \$10 for their copy, or more to cover for others, to please step up and send in your donations today. If your facility allows, you can send us stamps. To send a check, we need to send you instructions first.

animosidad y/o orgullo por una LO o la otra. Al mismo tiempo nosotros vemos que el acuerdo para Terminar Hostilidades nos ha permitido a todos el conocernos y apoyarnos los unos a los otros. Ahora está bien el asistir y estar ahí el uno por el otro, lo cual es grandioso. Nosotros hemos regresado a antes de que empezara la enemistad entre el Norte y el Sur, sin embargo lo que se necesita ahora es el salto hacia adelante.

¿Quieres leer más en español?

Tenemos algunos libros y revistas revolucionarios. Escríbenos para pedir los. 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.

We need volunteers who can read and write well in both English and Spanish to translate for Under Lock & Key. A fast growing segment of the U.S. prison population is Spanish-speaking migrants. By translating into Spanish, you can help ULK reach out to our imprisoned compañero@s.

Write in to put in work! ¡En Lucha!

ñas, no habrá reunificación entre el Aztlán encarcelado. Esto va a tomar pasos. La implementación de programas autorizados en los niveles más altos. Un programa inicial sería el formalmente desmantelar las formaciones del Sur/Norte. Al hacer esto la raza será simplemente Raza de nuevo.

Tatuajes de Norte/Sur serían prohibidos en el futuro. Esto ayudaría a aliviar conflictos y tensiones.

Continúa en la página 24...

El MIM(Prisiones)

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

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

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

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

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

2. La dictadura del proletariado es necesaria. En una dictadura del proletariado la anteriormente mayoría explotada dicta a la minoría, la que promovió la explotación, cómo se debe conducir a la sociedad. En el caso de naciones imperialistas, una dictadura del proletariado de naciones oprimidas en unión (JDPON siglas en inglés) debe hacer este papel en donde no hay proletariado interno o una base significativa de masas que favorecen el comunismo.

3. Promovemos un frente unido con todos los que se oponen al imperialismo. El camino a la JDPON sobre las naciones imperialistas incluye unir a todos aquellos que se puedan unir contra el imperialismo. No podemos pelear contra el imperialismo y pelear contra otros que están ocupados en conflictos de vida y muerte contra el imperialismo a mismo tiempo. Aún 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 el pensamiento de MIM ha extendido a través del análisis materialista, el imperialismo extrae súper-ganancias del Tercer Mundo y usa en parte esta riqueza para comprar poblaciones enteras de supuestos llamados trabajadores. Estos supuestos llamados trabajadores comprados por el imperialismo forman un nuevo sector de la sub-burguesía llamada la aristocracia laboral; ésta no es un vehículo para el Maoísmo. Aquellos que trabajan en los intereses económicos de la aristocracia laboral del Primer Mundo forman la masa básica del aprieto-mortal sobre el Tercer Mundo del imperialismo.

5. Nuevas burguesías se formaron bajo el socialismo. Mao guió el ataque para exponer a la burguesía que se desarrolló dentro del Partido Comunista de la Unión Soviética y la campaña para bombardear las jefaturas en su propio país, China. Esas experiencias demostraron la necesidad de revolución continua bajo la dictadura del proletariado. La lucha de clases no termina hasta que el estado se haya anulado y el comunismo se haya alcanzado.

6. La Gran Revolución Cultural del Proletariado en China fue el mayor avance hacia el comunismo en la historia. Apoyamos a la Unión Soviética hasta la muerte de Stalin en 1953, seguida por la República Popular China hasta 1976 como los mejores ejemplos del socialismo moderno en práctica. El arresto de la "cuadrilla de cuatro" en China y el ascenso de Krushchev en la Unión Soviética marcaron la restauración del capitalismo en esos países. Otros experimentos en el desarrollo del socialismo en el siglo XX fracasaron en sobrepasar el modelo Soviético (es decir, Albania), o peor, se quedaron dentro del modo capitalista de producción, generalmente debido al fracaso para romper con la Teoría de las Fuerzas Productivas.

Abbreviated Glossary- write in for our full glossary and more study materials on these topics (send \$4 or work trade)

TURTLE ISLAND: In the language of many northeastern Indigenous Nations, Turtle Island is used to refer to both the western hemisphere as a whole, as well as more specifically to refer to the northern land mass of the continent. We generally use the term "occupied Turtle Island" to refer to the territories of the United States and Canada, which are occupied by a European settler majority, while using "Turtle Island" to mean all of the Americas, which remain dominated by U.S. imperialism today.

IDEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS

MAOISM: Maoism is the doctrine which guided the first successful Third World peasant revolution that liberated China in 1949 and guided the building of socialism in that country until capitalism was restored in 1976. Maoism influenced all the subsequent anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia and inspired many other revolutionary movements including ones inside the United States.

Maoism is famous for many changes in China, including land reform; collectivization of agriculture in what was then a poor country; ejecting both foreign occupiers and pro-landlord elements with the strategy of "People's War" against numerically, financially and technically superior enemies; abolishing China's huge drug addiction problem; ending pornography and prostitution; eliminating the practice of breaking women's feet (footbinding) to make them smaller and supposedly cuter; establishing China's first law allowing divorce and eventually instituting worker-run industry without private property in the means of production.

Complete revolution is fundamental to Maoism. This means that all social, cultural, political and economic relations must be revolutionized. People will not be liberated by simply breaking the state or smashing capitalism. China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is the best example we have of this attempt to completely eradicate capitalist influence in a society.

INTERNATIONALISM: The ethical belief or scientific approach in which peoples of different nations are held to be equal. Internationalism is opposed to racism and national chauvinism.

We Maoists believe the nationalism of oppressed nations is "applied internationalism." We oppose nationalism of oppressed nations directed at other oppressed nations. We seek a united front of oppressed nations led by the international proletariat against imperialism.

Today there are two kinds of internationalism: bourgeois internationalism and proletarian internationalism. In the bourgeois internationalist view, peoples of all countries should have a chance to become exploiters. In the proletarian internationalist view, exploitation inevitably leads to violent conflict, so peace amongst nations depends on a global view not defending private property.

REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM: The solution to the plight of the oppressed nation in liberating itself from the global imperialist system to attain self-determination. Revolutionary nationalists see the struggle of the nation as primary. They may or may not be communists.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

IMPERIALISM: Lenin defined imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. 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 everyone on planet Earth faces 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.

CAPITALISM: Capitalism is a mode of production, or economic system, where the bourgeoisie or capitalist class owns the means of production and exploits the labor of the proletariat. Because the proletariat owns nothing, they are forced to sell their labor power on the market in exchange for what they need to survive. When they work for the capitalist, the capitalist owns the value that they create and only pays them the portion of this value to sustain themselves. The rest is called surplus value, or the profit exploited from the worker, which is the basic law of capitalist economic relations.

STATE CAPITALISM: Under state capitalism, the state nominally owns the means of production, but production is organized around profit, not the needs of the people. The Soviet Union became state capitalist under Khrushchev, and China became state capitalist under Deng Xiaoping. In both cases, a new bourgeoisie developed within the state apparatus and the Communist Party itself.

SOCIALISM: When Maoists use the term socialism we are referring to the transition stage between the capitalist mode of production and communism. This involves organizing society with the goal of meeting people's needs, not making profit. History shows that a dictatorship of the proletariat (as opposed to our present dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) is necessary to make socialism work and maintain democracy in a socialist society. Class struggle continues under socialism.

COMMUNISM: The abolition of power of people over people. This means abolishing all oppression, whether of nations by nations, classes by classes, women by men or any other division in society. Communism is based on mutual cooperation, peace and justice instead of oppression.

Long-run goals of communism include the abolition of classes and organizing society without governments or borders. As in certain tribal societies in the past and living still today, communists believe that it is possible for humans to organize themselves without war, crime, starvation and homelessness. When there are social problems, communists blame those problems on how society is organized. They seek to organize society to bring out the best in people, however flawed the species may be. No communist leader has ever claimed that a society has achieved communism yet. That means the industrial societies of our time have either lived in capitalism or socialism. Finally, communists believe that a communist party - not just ad hoc or individual organizing - is necessary to seize state power from the oppressors.

CLASS DEFINITIONS

BOURGEOISIE: The exploiter class most characteristic of the capitalist system. Their wealth is obtained from the labor of others, in particular the proletariat.

The term "bourgeoisie" now usually refers to the

capitalist class in common usage. The capitalist class is those who own enough property that they would not have to work to make a living. This class only works if it wants to. Also included in the term are people with very powerful positions in production or government generally. A ruler may or may not have great assets on hand, but if they really wanted them, they have the power to get them.

There is another common and critically important usage of the term "bourgeoisie." Technically the bourgeoisie includes other sections, including those more numerous than the capitalist class. The "petty-bourgeoisie" or "petit-bourgeoisie" refers to people who are exploiters but not on the scale of the capitalists. The petty-bourgeoisie often owns its own means of production or professional skills but does not hire enough workers to be able to quit working and still live a life of leisure. There are other categories of bourgeoisie that are not capitalist, such as what Mao called the "comprador bourgeoisie" which owes its existence to imperialist capitalists and cannot function on its own as a capitalist class.

LABOR ARISTOCRACY: Unlike the traditional petty bourgeoisie, they do not own their own means of production and so must work for others. But unlike the proletariat and semi-proletariat, the labor aristocracy in the First World earn more than the value of their labor and therefore have interests that fall in the bourgeois camp allying with imperialism.

In the First World today we define this group as the lower segment of the petty-bourgeoisie, working for a wage and earning more than the value of their labor but without the means to get a loan to start a small business themselves. This group benefits from the imperialist world's superexploitation of the Third World. They are bought off by the imperialists with these superprofits. In the First World this group is not exploited and so not part of the proletariat. On the contrary, their incomes are often higher than those traditionally classified as the petty bourgeoisie in the Third World, further demonstrating their bourgeois character.

PROLETARIAT: The group of people who have nothing to sell but their labor power for their subsistence. The proletariat does not draw any profit from any kind of capital because they have none. Proletarians are propertyless and thus have "nothing to lose but their chains." The proletariat is the least conservative element of society.

There are several groups that fall within the proletariat: 1. The working proletariat are exploited by others who make a profit off their labor. 2. The non-working proletariat make up the reserve army of the proletariat. In current times this group is usually temporarily unemployed and seeking employment. The long-term unemployed usually fall into the lumpen-proletariat. 3. The lumpen-proletariat, a group of people who are unable to sell their labor power in the long term and so end up living as parasites on other proletarians. This group is found in the Third World, and is distinct from the First World lumpen.

FIRST WORLD LUMPEN: The class of people in the First World who are excluded from the productive process. By virtue of living in the First World this class, on average, receives more material benefits from imperialism than the global proletariat. As such their interests are not the same as the exploited classes and we do not include them in the "lumpen-proletariat." But their conditions in many ways parallel those of the lumpen-proletariat standing in stark contrast to the majority of the First World populations. This class includes U.S. prisoners, which is a focus of the organizing work MIM(Prisons) does today.

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Under Lock & Key No. 60

January/February 2018

...Continued from page 21

...Censors

Mississippi - South MS Correctional Institution

A prisoner reports:

"The South Mississippi Correctional Institution has implemented practices by which ANY book sent to a prisoner for 'free' is censored, rejected, and returned to the sender. The rejection notices say only that 'free books are not allowed' and/or that 'inmates must pay for books.' There are 33 facilities housing MDOC prisoners and SMCI is the only prison doing this! This means that prisoners cannot benefit from any free books to prisoners programs. Some prisoners, including this writer, are challenging this practice via legal venues (i.e. grievances, potential lawsuit). Anyone wishing to protest this practice may do so by writing Superintendent Jacqueline Banks, PO Box 1419, Leakesville, MS 39451 or jbanks@mdoc.state.ms.us. If possible cc all letters to MDOC Commissioner Pelicia Hall, 633 N. State Street, Jackson, MS 39202 (peliciahall@mdoc.state.ms.us)."★

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...Continued from page 7

...Prison Economy

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Document Prison Abuses

We receive many reports about terrible conditions, abuse and neglect in prisons across the country. While most of these don't make it onto the pages of Under Lock & Key, we do type these up for publication on our website (www.prisoncensorship.info). Documenting and monitoring the abusive conditions in American prisons is an important part of our work. Keep sending in these reports!

In November 2016 we launched our new Conditions Reports pages online. Web readers can search by state and facility to read your reports.

...Continuado de la pág. 22

...Reunificar

Un periodo de transición relajaría a la raza y luego la siguiente fase de la unificación de EME/NF sería necesaria aún si ellos mantienen comités separados con una nueva organización política. Pero, una nueva organización con un nuevo nombre es necesaria para proveer un vistazo al nuevo futuro de un Aztlán unificado. En algún punto, el Aztlán encarcelado debe de moverse y crear un nombre en el que todos estén de acuerdo, de otra manera ni un lado ganara nunca al otro lado.★