

The Voice of the Anti-Imperialist Movement from

Under Lock & Key



Spring 2020, No. 70

Publication of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

Debt Forgiveness to Third World to Combat Covid-19

by MIM(Prisons)
April 2020

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced yesterday that the WHO joins the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in supporting debt relief to poorer countries to help them combat the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic fallout.(1) Now is the time for the international community to call for full debt forgiveness for countries in Africa, South Asia and Central and South America.

Religious leaders have renewed the call for a debt jubilee, which in the Bible is a grace period from slavery and debt. It is a period of renewal, for a fresh start. Most notably, in a broadcast to the Philippines, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle asked "Could the coronavirus crisis lead to a jubilee of forgiveness of debt, so that those who are in the tombs of indebtedness could find life — untie them, release them."(2) The Cardinal went on to say that the wealthy countries have spent too much on weapons when people are dying for lack of ventilators in hospitals across the globe.

News of the spread of coronavirus in the Third World is starting to emerge. Being at the periphery of the economy may have granted many Third World countries a little more time to respond. But as the richest countries in the world prove unable to prevent deaths due to lack of supplies and preparations, the situation in Third World countries will in all likelihood prove more dire. In all countries, the death rate is revealing the ineffectiveness of an economic system guided by the profit motive in meeting humyn needs.

MIM(Prisons) stands in unity with the Cardinal's call. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been the institutions that issue and manage the majority of loans, along with accompanying structural adjustment programs, that have sucked wealth from the Third World to the First World since the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. Therefore we must demand absolute forgiveness of these debts, a true jubilee, without the further meddling of these imperialist institutions in the economies of sovereign nations.

If there were ever time for a fresh start, it is now. The economic fallout from the current crisis is only just beginning. Forgiving debt to the poorest countries in the world will free up scarce resources and save countless lives. ■

Notes:

1. Stephanie Nebehay, 2 April 2020, COVID-19 cases and deaths rising, debt relief needed for poorest nations - WHO, Yahoo! News.
2. COVID-19: Cardinal Tagle urges "forgiveness of debt" of poor countries. 31 March 2020, LaCroix International, Vatican City.

*Coronavirus coverage
continued on p. 5...*



Q&A with MIM(Prisons), Spring 2020

by MIM(Prisons)
May 2020

Where you been?

We've been here, at least some of us. Our last issue of *ULK* was *ULK* 69, which came out in October 2019. In that issue we announced a planned pause to launch a new newsletter in January. Those plans fell apart in December when most of those comrades left the project.(see p. 14)

Wait, i'm new, i never even got *ULK* 69

If you wrote us for the first time after we mailed out *ULK* 69 you should have got some kind of response from us. Many new subscribers were only sent a back issue of *ULK* and no further info. This issue (70) should get everyone up to speed. However, due to the shelter-in-place orders and our limited resources we are

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newsletter is 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 Khrushchev in the Soviet Union marked the restoration of capitalism in those countries. Other experiments in developing socialism in the 20th century failed to surpass the Soviet model (i.e. Albania), or worse, stayed within the capitalist mode of production, generally due to a failure to break with the Theory of Productive Forces.

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?

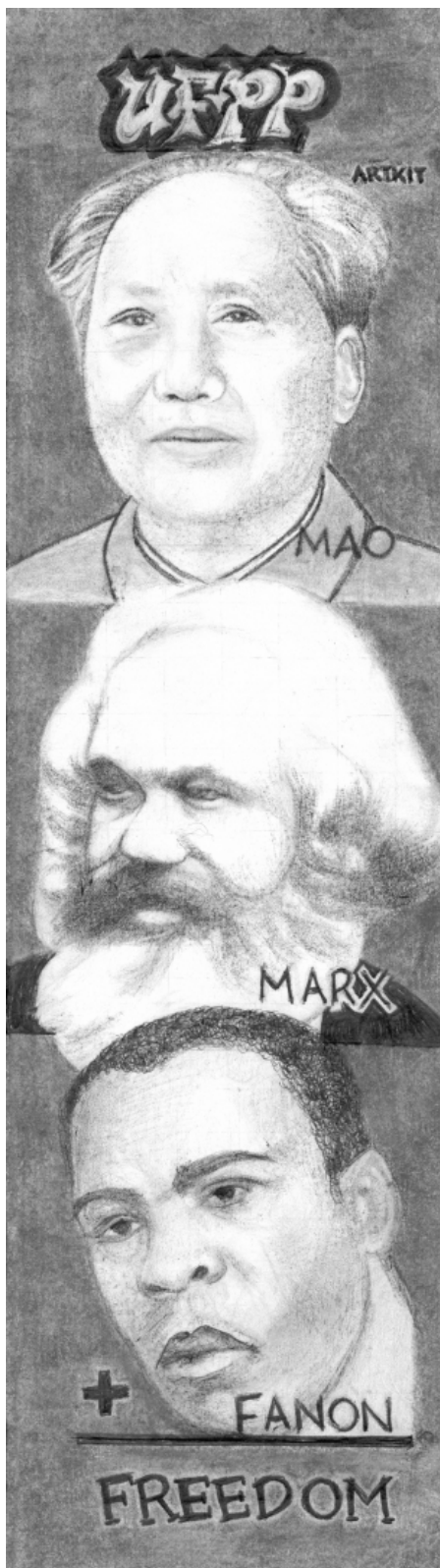
★ Study and uphold the five principles above.

★ 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 on the dotted line to make a bookmark/flyer about the United Front for Peace in Prisons (UFP). See the opposite side of this bookmark for info about the 5 Points of Unity.

• Try to get others on board with the UFP where you're at, and write in to *ULK* about any shifts in prison politics due to the United Front.

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...Q&A

not doing a mailing to our full subscriber list. Only those who write in after this issue is released will be sent a copy.

How are you doing?

We're doing as good as we can. The setbacks in December were challenging. But those of us who remain are healthy so far, and are not facing any immediate setbacks from the pandemic. In fact, we saw a 42% increase in data pulled from our website in April, which we imagine is related to people sheltering in place to avoid COVID-19.

What have you been up to?

We've actually done a lot in 2020. Before the comrades left this winter we had spent a lot of time working with our partners in RAIM to develop plans for the newsletter, as well as developing our ideological unity around Maoism. Besides some edits to our definition of Maoism, we put out an extensive response to the book *Continuity and Rupture*, which goes through the history of Maoism here in occupied Turtle Island and relates it to the International Communist Movement (ICM). We could not fit that essay in this issue of *ULK*, but if you are interested please write in to request a copy. You can also get a copy of the book itself from us for \$8 (stamps or ask us for info on how to pay by check) or work trade. It is a good explanation of some of the concepts behind Maoism and where it comes from. However, our essay addresses some serious disagreements with the historical facts and some of the author's political line. We recommend it to all who are studying Maoism.

Since the last *ULK* we've focused much energy outside of prisons, to invest in building a more resilient movement on the streets. Of note, we launched a new online platform that has been in the work for years, which has allowed us to build with a number of new comrades. We released plans for the launch of Anti-Imperialist Prisoner Support (AIPS), a mass organization for people on the outside to support USW and MIM(Prisons) work. Our subscribers can now link up their outside contacts with AIPS to make direct contributions to Maoist prisoner support in the United States. Just have your people get in touch with us via our website www.prisoncensorship.info/contact

We took the opportunity of the intro study group coordinator leaving to revamp the entire course, both the study questions as well as the format. This new format allows people to complete the course at their own pace, rather than having to wait for the next

course to start, or for others to answer. We hope this means our subscribers will be able to develop their political consciousness more rapidly and with sustained interest. The new format is already showing good results in the responses we have seen.

The introductory study course has been open to prisoners for many years, and hundreds of people have participated over that time. In 2020, we started offering our intro study course online for the first time. We are linking AIPS comrades to our intro study group participants inside, to help build bridges between inside and outside, and to help everyone develop their political consciousness more deeply.

Despite the pause in *ULK*, we have sent in 100s of pieces of literature each month through our Free Political Books to Prisoners Program.

Are all your programs still running?

No, we simply cannot do what we were doing until we can get more comrade time dedicated to those tasks. This will happen by training new people and/or having others provide the money we need to keep operating so existing comrades have more time to put in.

Some tasks we cannot sustain at this time are producing Spanish-language content and coordinating the Prisoners' Legal Clinic. Our capacity to appeal censorship on behalf of MIM Distributors will be even more focused on instances that are being actively fought by our subscribers. We will still send subscribers Spanish language materials that are already produced, as well as legal guides available through our Free Books program.

But *ULK* is back?

We're not sure yet. Our plan A was to launch a new newsletter, in partnership with other cells/groups, uniting on MIM's 3 cardinal principals (see MIM(Prisons) points 4-6). This newsletter would have more than tripled our distribution, with most copies being distributed outside of prisons. We still think we need such a newsletter to unite a broader Maoist Internationalist Movement. But until people step up with the effort, money and political line to do this project, this plan is on hold.

Plan B is to recontinue *Under Lock & Key*, to serve as the voice of the anti-imperialist prisoner movement led by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism through MIM(Prisons)'s role as editor. *ULK* came out every other month and was free to all prisoners of the United States who wrote us

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End All Sanctions Until the Pandemic is Over!

by MIM(Prisons)
April 2020

On 2 April 2020 Cuban President Miguel Canel-Diaz said,

"Cuba denounces the fact that medical supplies from [China's] Alibaba Foundation to help combat Covid-19 have not arrived in the country due to the criminal US blockade against the island nation."(1)

These life-saving supplies were blocked by the United States, which has put economic sanctions on Cuba since its revolution liberated the island from the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in 1959.

At the same time that the United States is blocking Chinese support from entering Cuba, there are reports that Americans are in China buying supplies that are destined for countries in Europe.(2)

The COVID-19 virus affects everyone. It is in everyone's interests to slow the spread of the virus, and to develop effective treatments for it. These actions by the United States go against the interests of all the world's people.

The leaders of the world need to come together in one common cause until this pandemic is over. Since late March, the United Nations has been making a similar call, urging an end to all military actions worldwide.(3)

We call on the United States and its partners to:

1. Halt all blockades, embargoes and sanctions so that resources can flow freely to countries that need them to fight COVID-19.
2. Halt all military actions as a gesture of peace and unity of all of humankind in combating this pandemic, and put that portion of the military budget into mobilizing treatment for people in the United States who need support and protection from COVID-19.
3. Forgive debts to the poorest countries of the world so that they have the resources to do their part to fight the spread of this virus. ■

Notes:

1. Steve Sweeney, 2 April 2020, US blocks medical aid to Cuba in show of 'wild west brutality', Morning Star Online.
2. Democracy Now! 3 April 2020.
3. Edith M. Lederer, 23 March 2020, UN chief urges immediate global cease-fire to fight COVID-19.

Venezuela – 1st Target of Crisis-Driven Militarism

by MIM(Prisons)
April 2020

On 1 April 2020, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the United States had doubled military forces engaged in combating drug trafficking in the Pacific Ocean between the United States and South America. The primary purpose was stated as being to protect American lives from dangerous drugs. The secondary purpose was to destabilize the Maduro administration in Venezuela that Trump claims is propped up by drug money. The Maduro administration responded by commending the United States for trying to fight drug trafficking for the first time in decades.(1)

While these actions are part of a long history of political warfare in the region, this announcement is also significant in that it is the first show of militarism to stave off the

looming economic depression facing the imperialists and the global economy. Finance capital is in crisis.

As Lenin explained, the portion of capital that is finance capital only increases with

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every 6 months to stay on the mailing list. Whether we can return to that model is still being considered.

Plan C would be doing something less regular, with less content and/or more restricted distribution, which is effectively what we are doing with *ULK 70*. Before we make any concrete decisions, we decided to put out *ULK 70* as a first step in sorting out our longer-term plan. We wanted to send our readers an update, including all of the in-depth content included in this issue. We wanted to let people know we're still here and still serious. And we wanted to make one more call for support. How we proceed will depend on the response from our subscribers, as well as potential contributors outside. And, like the rest of the world, we are not sure what will be the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

How can i support the newsletter?

In order to consistently produce new issues of *Under Lock & Key*, we must fill the gap in resources we had before we stopped. This gap is in both comrade time and money. One of our biggest successes in the last couple months has been the launch of the online platform, and the streamlining of the process of getting prisoner writings typed and published on our website. Helping out with typing, proof-reading, formatting and even

writing articles for *ULK* is one way to help. Providing consistent funding is another. Comrades in prison, perhaps you can help recruit people to do both. You don't have to contribute a lot, but we do need supporters who can contribute consistently, that we can rely on to keep the newsletter going.

To reignite Plan A we need to develop cells within MIM and mass organizations that are doing work on the ground that produce diverse content for such a newsletter, an outlet for distributing it, and funding.

Currently, Plan C might include publishing a newsletter whenever we can. This model has the benefit of responding to reader support; as support goes up, the newsletter becomes more regular. However, we think consistency is important up front, especially if we are to be effective at keeping our imprisoned subscribers informed in a relatively timely manner, as we must do to sustain our movement.

Therefore, we are asking for everyone's support in making *ULK* a regular newsletter once again, to play its unique role of publicizing and supporting anti-imperialist organizing in the dungeons of the belly of the beast! For people inside, write to your people outside and encourage them to get involved. For people outside, contact us with a pledge of how much you can contribute every 2 months, in work and/or funding. ■

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...Venezuela

time. This leads to a very top-heavy economy. One of the primary laws of capitalism is that all capital must circulate. Unlike industrial capital, finance capital is not involved in the actual production of material goods and value. As such it is not limited by humyn consumption, as long as there are profits to be made. The problem is that capitalism, unlike an economic system based on humyn need, cannot adapt to economic slowdowns such as the current one imposed by the health needs of humyns facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

If the economy is shrinking, while finance capital is always growing, then there are not enough places for that finance capital to circulate into to return a profit. This is reflected in the recent reduction of interest rates by the Federal Reserve to 0%. When profit rates are high, people will borrow at higher rates to invest and return a profit. When banks are struggling to loan money for free, that means there are no profits to be made by finance capital. Stock markets losing close to a third of their value in recent weeks also demonstrate the lack of outlets for finance capital.

The United States and other imperialist countries have passed stimulus plans to try to keep their consumer classes afloat. The consumption of luxury goods plays an important role in the circulation of capital, by increasing demands on production. As the skies of urban centers become clear of pollution, and animals take the opportunity to stretch their legs in areas normally dominated by humyns and pollution, finance capital becomes desperately confined when the consumer classes reduce their consumption to necessities. This is true even as Amerikans and Europeans continue to enjoy higher levels of consumption and comfort than the majority of the world.

Revolutionary Projects Often Fail Due to Lack of Political Consciousness join MIMP's study courses

We support **prisoner-led study groups** with lit and study questions. Tell us about your study group to get stocked up!

We also run correspondence study courses. In the **introductory study group**, get a deeper understanding of the science of dialectical materialism and some basics on Maoism. Graduates can go on to join our University of Maoist Thought, which studies more advanced material. Write in to sign up and get more info.

A third factor limiting the circulation of capital, that is still accelerating, is the closure of borders and, with it, a shift in international trade. Imperialism is by definition an international system, and without massive global trade it cannot extract massive super-profits from the exploited nations of the world and distribute them amongst the imperialist country populations. The drug trade has long been an important part of international trade and finance capital. So this move announced by Trump can likely be seen as an exertion of force by the imperialists on the black market to meet some financial interests.

However, the more troubling driver to all this is imperialist militarism. It was global economic crises and trade wars that led to the first two inter-imperialist wars (with guns). This is because war destroys capital, while stimulating production and consumption in the process. War requires production for war, and production to rebuild after it. It is the final solution for the otherwise unresolvable contradictions of imperialism, specifically that of over-production. This move towards Venezuela is just the first in what we predict

to be a coming escalation of militarism. And the most likely targets will be countries that have resisted the U.S. imperialists' programs as Maduro, and Hugo Chavez before em, have done.

Today, the Maduro administration remains in power over a year after the United States attempted a military coup against it, without actually sending in an invading force.(2) The United States continues to push Maduro to give up power to a "transitional government" under threat of continued sanctions and International Criminal Court charges co-signed by imperialist lackeys in the region. While rumors of further military action in this war on Venezuela have long been circulating, we predict that the economic downswing will be the push to make that happen. It is the duty of all who love freedom and justice to build an all-out resistance to a rising tide of militarism from the imperialist countries. ■

Notes:

1. From the South, 1 April 2020, TeleSur.
2. Soso of MIM(Prisons), "Imperialists Push Coup in Venezuela to Secure Oil for Amerikans," ULK 67, January 2019.

Call on G20 to Cancel \$1 Trillion in TW Debt

by MIM(Prisons)
April 2020

Recent United Nations estimates of the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic show that half a billion people, or 8% of the population, could be pushed into poverty (using World Bank poverty lines of \$1.90 - \$3.20 per day). The worst hit areas are projected to be South Asia and East Asia. This will be the first time global poverty has increased since 1990 and this could wipe out all the progress made in reducing poverty in that time.

If the UN's worst-case projection proves true, it will be a huge blow to the image of capitalism as a force of progress. In recent years, capitalists have been using global income statistics to try to disprove Karl Marx's theories that the masses are continuously impoverished to more extremes under the pressures for profits under capitalism. Of course we have always countered that the bulk of this reduction can be accounted for by China, whose success is built on the radical land reform and unleashing of the productive forces during its socialist period, which ended by 1976. Still, this propaganda point has been hard to counter in a popularly accepted way.

There is nothing like a crisis to lead people to question capitalism's ability to meet peoples' needs. Yet in the short-term, we see the interests of the Third World proletariat in some of the proposals coming

from bourgeois internationalists looking to limit the depths of the coming crisis. A newly proposed plan from Oxfam calls for \$2.5 trillion, "made up of \$1 trillion in debt relief, \$1 trillion in additional liquidity mobilized through SDRs [Special Drawing Rights - which is like grant money from the IMF] and \$500bn in aid to support developing country health systems." They offer potential impacts of this plan:

"The immediate cancellation of US\$1 trillion worth of developing country debt payments in 2020. Cancelling Ghana's external debt payments in 2020 would enable the government to give a cash grant of \$20 dollars a month to each of the country's 16 million children, disabled and elderly people for a period of six months."

Such life-saving amounts are a fraction of the benefits Amerikans are already receiving from pandemic-related funding bills. Oxfam has done the math to back up calls already coming from the Vatican for international finance capital to forgive debt to the Third World. In addition to debt relief, it proposes a \$1 trillion fund (called SDRs above) of international reserves that can be drawn on by the indebted countries during the pandemic.

The United States has passed laws to extend unemployment to self-employed and informal workers, recognizing the lack of safety net for those people. Oxfam points out

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that is only 18% of the population in rich nations, while for poor nations 90% of the people are informal workers with no safety net. Oxfam's report cites the United Nations, saying that half of jobs in Africa could be lost in the coming months. But the latest stimulus plan from the United States only offered \$1.1 billion to address the crisis in poor countries, a mere 0.05 % of the \$2.2 trillion plan.

The Oxfam report hints at an international tax on the most profitable companies or wealthiest individuals as another form of wealth redistribution to provide the needed funding. MIM has long stood for a global maximum income for all of the world's citizens as a similar form of limiting wealth accumulation and hoarding.

Madonna somberly referred to COVID-19 as the "great equalizer" from a luxurious bath in her mansion. But the Third World proletariat will not be reporting in on video from a rose petal bath during "stay at home" orders. Coming into this crisis, 46 countries were spending on average four times more money on debts than their public health services, and 113 countries had IMF-required austerity plans in place as conditions for those debts. The people of those countries are starting off far behind us in the imperialist countries. Health care is already seriously inadequate, and people were already living on the bare essentials. They have much less of a cushion than us, despite all our bills and personal debts. Madonna is correct that this crisis does affect everyone, both threatening their health and economic stability, but it is far from equalizing.

Uniting the globe to fight this pandemic must address the unequal needs and access of the oppressed nations of the world. Onerous debt repayments and the economic restructuring requirements that accompany them, is one of the major causes of the destitution faced by the global proletariat, reaching its highest point at 191% of those countries GDPs in 2018. Now is the time to forgive these debts, release control of economic policies, and grant national self-determination to countries that have effectively been neo-colonies of the United States, and international finance capital in general, for decades.

Oxfam is calling on the G20 Finance Ministers at their 15 April 2020 meeting and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank which are meeting 17-19 April 2020, to take on their proposed plan. ■

Notes:

1. Oxfam International, 9 April 2020, Dignity Not Destitution: An 'Economic Rescue Plan for All' to tackle the Coronavirus crisis and rebuild a more equal world.

Debt Relief to Combat COVID-19 Blocked by U.S. Imperialism

by MIM(Prisons)
May 2020

In April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) began considering calls for aid to Third World countries in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.(1) Since then, finance capital flows have begun moving out of the Third World and back into the United States, resulting in currencies in those countries losing their value. This is making it impossible for these countries to pay off their existing debt burdens, as well as to fund much-needed relief for their people during this crisis.

In our previous article, we mentioned the possibility of the IMF issuing Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) which would allow all countries to access funds, via the United Nations, without accruing additional debt and interest. We have also been echoing the call for complete debt forgiveness, or jubilee, for the poorest nations of the world.

In place of these measures, the United States has set up a system where countries can apply for dollars in exchange for local currency from the U.S. Federal Reserve Board. This allows the United States to decide who gets funding. Due to their control of the IMF, the Americans have already blocked funding to Venezuela to combat the pandemic.(2)

The money being offered from the the Fed will also be given as loans, with interest.(2) Already, the most exploited countries of the world cannot afford to pay off existing loans. Many countries are spending more on debt payments than healthcare during the pandemic.(1) In addition, these loans, unlike the proposed SDRs, will have conditions that give the Americans control over the path of development these countries take in the future.

The exiting of finance capital from the Third World will have the effect of passing the impacts of the economic crisis disproportionately on to

those countries. Meanwhile, the United States is offering to send dollars back to put these countries further into debt and ratchet up further policy control over their economies. While the United States is currently leading the world in deaths due to the novel coronavirus, the Third World nations are likely destined to see much more dire death and suffering without debt forgiveness, unconditional aid, and the lifting of sanctions and embargoes by the imperialists.

In times of capitalist expansion, exporting finance capital works to transfer wealth from the Third World periphery to the First World nations. Now that the economy is quickly contracting, the methods above show how pulling finance capital out of the periphery also transfers wealth to the First World nations. Ultimately, national liberation struggles are necessary to free the peripheral countries from the economic system of imperialism that uses them as a source of wealth at the expense of much humyn suffering. ■

Notes:

1. MIM(Prisons), April 2020, Call on G20 to Cancel \$1 trillion in TW Debt next week.
2. Prabhat Patnaik, 30 April 2020, Monthly Review Online.



Individualism Equals Hunger

by a Texas prisoner
April 2020

Have you ever wondered why there is such an abundance of food here on earth, yet people are still going to bed hungry and starving to death? The following is a brief report on what is happening with the food and how I tie in individualism.

I relate individualism with pure selfishness and greed. Here are a few statistics in regards to food waste: "An estimated 25% of the world's food calories and up to 50% of total food weight are lost or wasted before they can be consumed. In rich countries most of that waste occurs in home, restaurants, or supermarkets."(1)

We see that half the world's food is wasted by consumers in the more developed countries. I see a problem as mentioned in the three areas as overstocking to fit the needs of expedencies and conveniences. This of course creates poor food distributive practices.

It is said that "consumers in the developed world could reduce waste by taking such simple steps as serving smaller portions, eating leftovers, and encouraging

cafeterias, restaurants, and supermarkets to develop waste-reducing measures."(2)

Once again here is where individualism shows its appearance. We live in a world that for the most part doesn't care about eir fellow humyns' real living conditions. As long as the individual continues in eir life of luxuries what is it to em how much food ey throws away?

Once we as a society can learn to care about one another and become more altruistic, no longer viewing one another as a possible profit, then we can have a society built around a more harmonious and genuine comradeship. We can erase the cut-throat capitalist market that only seeks to exploit humyns worldwide. Once this system is done away with we will see a world without hunger and starvation.

I am a true believer in internationalism, seeing that we are united world-wide regardless of the pigment of our skins. We cannot be blinded by nationalism playing both blind and deaf to the sufferings of our fellow humyns across the globe.

MIM(Prisons) adds: This article takes on new meaning in the time of coronavirus, where mandates to stay home are in effect around the globe. Where some people are hoarding food items due to their individualism and fear, others are going without.

Petty-bourgeois people who are used to having every possible food item available to them, and oftentimes with two-hour delivery, are facing some form of food scarcity, many for the first time in their lives.

For many people, it's simply unsafe to go shopping for themselves, and people are relying on their family and neighbors to bring

them food. In the United States it is private delivery drivers and grocery store workers who are providing these life necessities during this time. And they are often doing so while facing dangerous situations because the individualistic behavior of their customers is unpredictable.

Meanwhile, there are parts of the world where the state is providing food packages to the homes of people so they can stay in. And these aren't even socialist countries.

Whether it comes to deciding what precautions to take during a pandemic, or deciding how to avoid wasting food, we cannot rely on a culture that puts individual choice first to do a good job. The United States currently has more people with coronavirus than any other country, including China where it began and where there are many more people. This is in large part due to our individualist culture.

And while this comrade's call is very relevant today, we must disagree with the blanket condemnation of nationalism. The national contradiction is coming to light as it always does during crisis; from New Afrikans dying disproportionately in the United States to dire situations developing in the Third World. That is why in calling for the world to come together as one, we must be calling for an end to sanctions and embargos, a halt to military operations and debt forgiveness to the exploited nations of the world so that they can have a greater degree of national autonomy in meeting their peoples' needs in this pandemic.

Individualism is a cancer to society, with or without a coronavirus. Hopefully COVID-19 helps illuminate this to people, and gives them a vision of what society could be like when we work together for the benefit of all of humynity. ■

Notes:

1. May 2019 issue of National Geographic, p. 45 #FutureFood
2. Ibid., p. 46



Return Life-Saving Machines to Prisoners at CMF

by a California prisoner
April 2020

Filing my April Report from the California Medical Facility (CMF) at Vacaville, California.

This is a hospital, we are all here because we are high risk medical and most of us are 55+ years of age if not older. And those of us with Obstructive Sleep Apnea suffer from a life-threatening condition for which we require the use of a CPAP/BiPAP breathing machine to allow us to keep breathing as we

sleep. Today the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), using Gastapo tactics, has come in and confiscated our DMEs (Durable Medical Equipment). Thereby placing all our lives at risk under the color of law.

I requested C.O. Gorbe, our dorm officer who since his assignment to our dorm has made a hostile environment, to make a copy of my health care 602 [grievance form] with supporting documents attached, as is my right before I submitted it. I was denied this request and for this reason I submitted this

health care 602 attached to a CDCR 22 form with the CDCR 602 H.C. Grievance. And I have been successful in encouraging others to follow suite and file appeals.

My people have been calling the facility and they are denying these as allegations, refusing to acknowledge to our loved ones this even happened. And telling us this is to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Which makes NO sense. I am not infected and their reporting no cases here at CMF. Yet they are placing our lives at risk of our OSA.

Continued on next page...

New Location, Old Conversations, New Technique

by USW9 of United Struggle from Within
April 2020

Revolutionary Greetings,

This letter is to inform you that I have been transferred. My transfer was long overdue and now after those long years in Ad-Seg I should be getting released to population soon. I am now housed in a two-man cell after spending the last three years in a one-man cell because that's the way the other units in Ad-Seg is set up. So that also is an adjustment I've had to make to my work-out/sleep schedule.

This is another of the Arkansas units that's known for rampant drug trade and use, so I'm trying to prepare myself for combating the mindset that comes along with that among my fellow prisoners. I have been here now for two weeks and have not heard any revolutionary conversations, let alone any political discussions that were based on concrete research or facts. No one is talking about unity or anything of that nature.

I started a conversation with another prisoner about the going-on in Iran. I told him that I assume Chump assassinated Iran's commander to initiate a war because of the upcoming "elections," and the prisoner I was talking to started taking a defensive stance and the kapitalist mindset came out. You know the justification, "Oh, the economy is

better than it has ever been!" When I asked him at what price has the economy got so great he got in his feelings and told me I sound like one of the Trump haters that have been trying to come up with anything to get him out of office! I then just changed the subject to the San Francisco 49ers taking the Super Bowl this year but he didn't like that any more than the political discussion! Ha.

The point I was trying to make about who actually pays the price for Amerikkkan prosperity was completely missed and I was reminded of something I read in the essay "Intro to Neo-Colonialism" by Kwame Nkrumah, which we are studying in the University of Maoist Thought (UMT). Nkrumah states "In fact neo-colonialism is the victim of its own contradictions. In order to make it attractive to those upon whom it is practised it must be shown as capable of raising their living standards, but the economic object of neo-colonialism is to keep those standards depressed in the interest of the developed countries. It is only when this contradiction is understood that the failure of innumerable 'aid' programmes, many of them well intentioned, can be explained."

The reason I brought the issue of "aid programs" up is because in the course of the conversation my fellow prisoner's only grievance about Amerikkka was that these other countries (Iran, Russia, etc.) look at Amerikkka as weak, because after we go to

war with countries in the Middle East we send them all kinds of "aid." I started explaining the system of neo-colonialism and how none of these other countries are fooled into believing that the Amerikkkan government provides "aid" to these countries we've invaded out of righteous motives, but he couldn't grasp my point.

It just goes to show how deep kapitalist ideology indoctrinates its multitude of "patriots." Amerikkka has given you a life sentence in their machination of mass incarceration, but these dudes are still willing to argue for the monster's "honor."

It's hard for me to see any future victories over a kapitalist system that is so inextricably woven into the fabric of our present day society that I can see why it's so easy to become agreeable to the multitudes and just go along with the way the system is. Not myself personally, but so many others that I think should be on the side of the oppressed. It makes me question my own abilities in comparison to a Mao. Their essays and policies are so far-reaching and deep, and here I fail at getting a point across to a fellow oppressed prisoner, or as they say I can't even preach to the choir!

Well, as I said I was touching base to let you know about my transfer and my current status on getting ready to get released to population, and I also wanted to give my thanks to my komrades in the study group and the study group facilitators for helping me get through my time in Ad-Seg, and the growth I've experienced.

If it wasn't for this study group, among other things, I don't think that I would've made it through with a sound mind. So thanks again and I look forward to struggling into the future with UMT and MIM(Prisons).

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I'm sure this is going on at other facilities within CDCR and I encourage all our brothers and sisters to also file paperwork together we can make a difference!

I have wrote similar letters to:

- The Prison Law Office
- Office of Internal Affairs CDCR
- Office of the Inspector General
- U.S. Department of Justice-Civil Rights Division
- CDCR, office of the Ombudsman
- Rosen Bien Galvan and Grunfeld UP attorney at Law
- Cal-vets

I would like to respectfully request copies of the grievance petition forms, and also suggest all our effected brothers and sisters to also file and make this a real campaign. And contact your loved ones beyond the walls to call in and make the system aware that people outside are aware of their actions. Together let's hold them accountable for their actions!

Take Action! Ask your supporters to call (707) 448-6841 ASAP

Suggested message:

"I am calling on behalf of prisoners who have had their Durable Medical Equipment taken away during the COVID-19 pandemic. These machines help people with life-threatening conditions. I am requesting that prisoners at California Medical Facility be given access to these machines immediately. Can you tell me why these machines were taken away and when we can expect them to be returned?"

MIM(Prisons) adds: As this comrade states ey does not have symptoms of COVID-19. While there are reports online that CPAP machines could spread COVID-19, these patients should be tested for the virus if that is the concern. The fact that COVID-19 is becoming so widespread in prisons is a complete failure of the staff to protect prisoners. With proper practices, prisoners likely would not even be exposed to the virus — in many ways, imprisonment is the epitome of "shelter in place.." Prisoners with existing health conditions need not be put under additional threats to their health. ■

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 ULK, we do type these up for publication on our website (www.prisoncensorship.info).

Documenting and monitoring the abusive conditions in Amerikan prisons is an important part of our work. Keep sending in these reports! Web users can search by state and facility to read your reports.

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UMT coordinator of MIM(Prisons) responds: Before writing our response, we asked another comrade from UMT to respond to this article. We suggested a potential angle for responding.

"The main thing I was thinking to respond to (which does not need to be the thing you respond to, you can respond however you see appropriate) is that this persyn was not coming from a place of unity in the conversation with the other prisoner [more on the meaning of "total unity" below - Editor]. Ey was trying to make a point, or win a debate. That technique is useful if there's an audience of people who are coming to their own conclusions about the debate, hearing both sides. But for an individual conversation, I think we have to come from a place of total unity in order to help people see political distinctions. Again, you can respond however you see fit, I just wanted to offer that as an idea."

In response, our UMT comrade sent some feedback:

"With respect to the article, I'd have to disagree with your statement that the author was not coming from a place of unity. It is very difficult for me to see how ey could've found a better way to struggle with that persyn according to what I read."

"The fact that ey even attempted to engage that persyn in a political discussion is proof enough for me that ey was attempting to unite with em. Furthermore, what is political struggle with someone like that if not a debate? While I don't believe in showing people up who I'm trying to build with, I also don't believe in being subtle or sugar-coating reality for the sake of sparing someone's feelings. That would be liberalism, would it not?"

"I once read a MIM article in which the author stated that a good teacher doesn't assert the correct principles, rather they teach the correct principles. This is the model I always try to uphold when it comes to political struggle and I hope MIM(Prisons) still upholds it as well."

I think there is a very subtle distinction between unity and discussion, versus division and debate, that i am still learning how to bring to fruition in our work. Of course there will still be moments of disagreement with our comrades, which is perfectly healthy to political growth. And there will be moments of frustration and conflict within a revolutionary organization and movement. I believe the goal in these recruiting conversations is in minimizing the conflict, while hashing out the disagreements, and holding the other persyn in high esteem and unity throughout.

With people we're recruiting, there is

some baseline unity that we can build on. Either you're both prisoners, both have a deep hatred of capitalism or inequality, or you are working on the same campaign or project. Or as our UMT comrade says above, you are in a conversation at all, so there's unity. That level of unity is a good starting place, for sure.

If we're talking about helping people shift their deeply-held inaccurate beliefs which are reinforced by bourgeois propaganda daily; and empowering people to make a difference in their locality and the world; and asking people to take on the magnificent and difficult and self-sacrificing task of building revolution over the long-term while not cooperating with the pigs for their persynal benefit in the short-term, etc... then I believe a deeper unity is needed in order to break through all those barriers to catalyze this profound shift.

As advocates for the liberation of the world's people from the oppression of capitalism and imperialism, i believe we have an obligation to learn how to communicate with people in a way that we can be most effective. And I'm not saying to throw out accuracy and facts for the sake of false unity. It's about having discussions with (potential) comrades with unity as primary, even in spite of disagreement.

One way to picture this subtle distinction may be to pause at any point in a conversation and honestly ask yourself "is it blatantly obvious we are on the same team right now? or is it more like we are on opposing teams?" And ask yourself these questions from the other persyn's perspective, and from an observer's perspective, too. If the answer to this inquiry is that in that moment you are more in opposition than on the same team, then that's what i'm talking about.

Another barometer to measure whether we're coming more from unity or division, is to look at how do these conversations resolve? Are they resolved with greater unity and understanding, or, like in this letter we received, is the result that the persyn totally didn't grasp the message?

One appropriate time for debate is in a conversation where you are distinguishing whether you even want to be on the same team with a persyn or an organization. These private debates can help clarify for ourselves our own view, the views of others, and help decide the best steps forward in terms of working together, or not.

Another time and place for outright debating is in public discussions. When others witness a debate, it helps the viewer clarify

ON "OBJECTIVE" REPORTING

ULK 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 ULK. 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.

their understanding of the people in the debate, and helps clarify what views they are most aligned with. *Under Lock & Key* is a great public forum for these types of public debates.

And again, I'm **not** talking about letting things slide, or ignoring disagreements (that would be liberalism).(1) I'm talking about having conversations with people we are trying to unite with, coming from a place of deep listening. We have to, in a way, "allow" others to believe what they believe, in order to help them see something different. Not agreeing with them, but listening to them.

There are many conversational tactics and methods that can be used, and the effectiveness of specific language will vary persyn to persyn, culture to culture, situation to situation. Rather than a formula of things to say, i think cultivating one's authentic commitment to developing with others is what signifies to them a deep level of unity, no matter the words. Developing this commitment (even in spite of our own persynal frustrations!), as well as the tactics that are effective, is a lifelong practice. You can use this approach with anyone, even people who hold differing views. And i think this approach is a precursor to people even listening to facts or points being made, which is a precursor to deeper unity, growth, and recruiting.

Comrades in Maoist circles have disagreed with this approach, and have said it's too much focusing on subjective opinions and tone. And to that i would throw MIM's "where's the beef?" taunt back in our own face. Where's our success? Where's our results? If we're outright debating people we're trying to recruit, and simply trying to show them that they're wrong, is that working?

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Sparking Conversations, Building Independent Institutions

by an Arkansas prisoner
September 2019

First off I want to express gratitude and respect to the comrades that contributed to *ULK 68*. It has sparked some interesting conversations on the tier. And this dialogue is strengthening the unity; the only unity I've seen at this unit in the year and a half I've been here.

Here at Tucker Max Unit they have been keeping us restricted housing prisoners locked in our cells 24/7. We get one hour of yard every two weeks here at Gilligan's Island due to "lack of security." They recently re-opened their re-entry program and when they did so, they took officers off yard crew to go work the re-entry. They have made no effort in the past 3 months to replace these officers so re-entry is essentially running at the expense of our

constitutional rights. Yard call is a constitutional right, re-entry is not. From my understanding they receive so much money per each prisoner enrolled in their programs, i.e. re-entry, substance abuse treatment, therapeutic comm., and in my opinion the biggest sham of all: the step-down program that restricted housing prisoners are being forced to enroll in. The parole board is notorious for stipulating the first three programs as a condition for prisoners to be considered for release. They reap double benefits thru this system. They get extra money for your enrollment in this program and they can release you with some semblance of rehabilitation.

We, the prisoners, know these programs are a joke. And when they don't provide the rehabilitation sufficient upon release to hold it down and keep on top of our responsibilities then we become we the

repeat offender. And the Dept. of Corruptions is right here with their paternalistic arms wide open, all the while telling us it's our fault.

But to get another shot at freedom we'll be forced back into the same programs. Spoiler alert: it's not gonna work no matter how many times you take their programs, and that's by design. They don't want the programs to work. Why would they want us to stay out of prison? A requirement of these programs here in Arkansas is that you drop kites on other prisoners for shit as small as not tucking their shirts in, and if you don't you're considered as not "participating". What the fuck does that have to do with a person getting their shit together and preparing for the responsibilities that weigh us down when we get out?

To boycott these programs would be ideal, knowing the money they rake in off of them. But far be it from me to tell the next man to not do what he's gotta do to go home. But we can't depend on these programs to be the substance of our rehabilitation.

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I fully agree that viewing the world with the most accuracy as possible brings us power, which leads to effectiveness, and liberation. Sharing accuracy with others is extremely important to our work.

And I believe it's subjective to behave as if we live in a post-subjective society, and that the most efficient way to liberate the world's people is to go on unnecessarily dividing with people who could otherwise be our comrades. We can't teach people to think scientifically by pretending they are already fully objective scientific thinkers.

While working toward a cultural shift where people can see and hear facts delivered in any tone and in any manner, i believe we also need to acknowledge that our culture isn't there yet. It would behoove us to communicate with others with an awareness that this is the culture we're speaking into. And in my view, there's no harm to trying on different conversational techniques. Interacting with others from a place of profound unity (rather than just saying words or speaking one's mind) is one i would recommend trying out.

I would even argue that being an objective scientific thinker isn't about thinking scientifically 100% of the time — we are humyns after all, and part of being humyn is having subjective thoughts and feelings. Being objective isn't about squashing those impulses, it's about training ourselves to notice when we are approaching a question subjectively, and training ourselves to put that aside. Even long-time revolutionaries are subjective about things! We're just also

committed to developing our objective muscles. We can't expect that quality of listening from people who have a lifetime of practice in all subjectivism all the time.

I don't claim to be an expert in this technique, and i can definitely see how on the surface it sounds like liberalism or being wishy-washy. I believe it has been validated by all the seminal works i've studied on "how to relate to people" from Freire's **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** to studying about Mao's long march. That this view is in a minority in our organization is even further evidence of my lack of expertise in bringing this shift to our work. And, of course, maybe i'm wrong! Maybe head-on debate between individuals, in private, is the way to build unity, our organization, and our revolution.

I could go on even more trying to explain it, probably writing an entire book here. Instead i would love for comrades to try it out and let us know what they discover. If you come from a place of profound unity, deep listening and compassion in a conversation where you disagree with someone else, did anything shift in your relationship or organizing work with this persyn or people? ■

Note:
1. Mao Tse-tung, *Combat Liberalism*, 1937.



The Five Stages of Consciousness model in the Five Percent tradition will break these

Continued on p. 23...

United Struggle from Within Campaigns

CA USW PROMOTE PEACE DURING NDPF INTEGRATION

Last year California USW made a renewed call to focus on building the United Front for Peace in Prisons in the context of the new Non-Designated Programming Facilities that are integrating SNY and GP populations. This has been the major divide in CA for some time. And while many are uncertain and wary, this is also a potential opportunity to bridge that gap. Keep sending in your reports on successes and failures in building peace during the integration process. See the article below and California USW Primer for more info.

SPREAD UNDER LOCK & KEY

Every subscriber should pass this issue of *ULK* on to someone else. Even better if you can get them to actually read it! Share what you got from the newsletter, and how it has impacted your time in prison. We're happy to send you a replacement copy for the one you passed along.

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!

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 AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, FL, GA, IL, KS, LA, MS, MT, NV, NY, NC, OK, OR, SC, and TX. If the state-level petition doesn't bring relief, we now have a new follow-up petition written to federal law. Write in to get a copy of this additional resource which holds states accountable to federal requirements.

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) does not 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. 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.

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.

September 9th, 2020 will be the ninth annual Solidarity Demonstration in prisons across the United States. It's an opportunity for prisoners to commemorate the anniversary of the Attica uprising and draw attention to abuse of prisoners across the country, through actions of solidarity and education, while ceasing all prisoner-on-prisoner hostilities. This demonstration was initiated in 2012 by an organization participating in United Struggle for Peace in Prisons and has been taken up as an annual UFPP event, with people committing to participate all across the country. This day has taken on additional meaning in recent years with actions supported by other prisoner rights organizations.

See pages 3 for more info on what the UFPP is about, including a flyer you can share with others. Write in to let us know about what you are organizing for this 9/9 and get a copy of our 9/9 study pack. Send us reports on what happened as soon as you can and we will print them in the next issue!

We Can Choose the Next Phase of CDCR Prison Culture

by a comrade of USW
January 2020

On the subject of non-designated yards, the fact that the state's actors have sanctioned this social experiment where the labels that the state themselves created are now being altered by their creators means that the G.P./SNY dual system has run its course and failed miserably.

It also means that prisoners have to be re-educated on the history of prison labels in California, understanding that at one time all prisoners went to any yard where there was space and they fit the classification points criteria. The only prisoners who got sent to special yards at that time were the wealthy, the law enforcement convicted prisoners, and those media vilified infamous. These yards held low numbers of prisoners and weren't easy to get to, or gain reliable information about. However, once the state actors came up with 50/50 yards, SNY yard, it created new problems that would not only affect prisoner sub-culture in prison but an even huger problem on the streets due to the criminals' new option not to play by the old rules of the GAME that is not a game.

It's not a one-size-fits-all on the who's who level, on the G.P. nor SNY lines — there are snitches on both sides, rapists on both sides, hustlers on both sides, politicians on both sides, killers on both sides, thinkers on both sides, lumpen orgs on both sides. What needs to be analyzed is why are we still judging one another based solely on convictions when we have seen *13*, *White Like Me*, we've read *The New Jim Crow*, *Blacked Out Through White Wash*, *The Black Panthers Speak*, *Locked Up But Not Locked Down*, *A Taste of Power*, and *Dark Alliance*, etc.

WE know that all the courts care about is convictions and not truth or facts. We know that many people who go to trial get railroaded and made an example of. We know that many of us were forced to make deals based on the public defender's inability to provide adequate defense and we know many prisoners are wrongfully convicted and sentenced to decades behind these walls. Yet we keep judging our fellow prisoners based upon convictions from a corrupt system that works to justify its high percentage of convictions and deals, plea bargains, bails, etc. As one of the GODS

that's locked inside of this INJUSTICE system I refuse to take our open enemy's word about another oppressed prisoner, nor will I act on behalf of the STATE and harm another prisoner based on what happened as a result of the United Snakes Criminal Injustice system. Where I judge is based on the individual's personal conduct and willingness to act when the time demands action or when I see them deal with difficult situations — if they're rational, measured, and are they using reason-based decision making or not.

Comrades, we've got to think about what unity would bring us that is impossible if we continue being separated based upon STATE TITLE and LABELS. The question to all you self-styled revolutionaries is: can people change? Does experience and education reform an otherwise broken individual? Can we inspire the Blind, Deaf and Dumb to wake the fuck up and unite on some active social dynamics that is mutually beneficial to all commonly oppressed prisoners? Will we educate the next Revolutionary that will make change a reality? Or are we just pen and paper revolutionaries? ■

Pestilence Pilot Program: Another Way to Thin Out the Death Row Population at San Quentin

by USW73 of United Struggle from Within
April 2020

So here we are in San Quentin's death row experiment. The latest twist as we go head first into the COVID-19 pandemic may be described as a new method of execution. Many may not know most prisoners here die from something other than the "official" method of execution or that all sorts of ailments permeate the aging population. But saying the elderly here are now more at risk than before the outbreak would be an understatement.

As this report begins there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases among the death row population at San Quentin. There is however one confirmed case of the virus within the ranks of SQ staff. With visits suspended, the only remaining vector for COVID-19 is CDCR employees. They may bring it in to us without even knowing they're infected or spreading it. So it's only a matter of time until it spreads.

Despite knowing they are the only possible vector, SQ custody staff are not wearing N95 masks when "security" reasons require them to be within 6' of death row prisoners. Instead of halting the spread by taking precautions, the higher ups set up a "window dressing display" that consists of pretending to be complying with Newsom's shelter-in-place order by implementing a rotating yard schedule for death row. Half of East Block's death row prisoners go to their 7 different yards one day, then the others (which includes 1 of 2 tiers in Donner Section) go the next day. That may sound like it facilitates "social distancing" ***but** where prisoners are celled and which of those 7 yards each is assigned to, is not balanced in any way. One day we see upwards of 35 prisoners on some yards. The next day some yards have only 3 or 4. Again, don't forget there are no COVID-19 cases among prisoners while the only vector is conducting those yards release/returns with close proximity to all of us, without N95 masks. That means the rotating yard schedule is in no way conducive to stopping the spread of COVID-19 among death row prisoners (or any of the other staff for that matter).

While nobody in any California prison is **not** at risk, death row prisoners at SQ are intentionally being put at risk when exposure is avoidable. Oh, by the way, as for those who may reason death row prisoners don't deserve to be safeguarded from COVID-19, consider the fact that when we start taking up space in hospitals and precious spaces are being used up when this

pandemic really takes off, you can thank the disrespectful sows and their lack of urgency regarding this national emergency for that.

[Update, Addendum] On the morning of 29 March 2020, it was announced over the P.A. system that medical quarantine is now in place and there will be no yard program. The reason for the quarantine is not yet confirmed but it only applied to death row. One corrections officer, on 30 March 2020, did supply a simple answer to the question about why there was a medical quarantine — a breakout of influenza **not** COVID-19.

Shortly after April Fool's Day the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued guidelines recommending everyone leaving their homes for essential travel to wear a cloth mask. That decision was made due to evidence that asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 can be contagious 48 hours before exhibiting any symptoms [and many people are contagious and never end up showing symptoms at all - editor]. Unfortunately, instead of following CDC guidelines, the disrespectful sows employed by CDCR assigned to warehousing its death row population continue to snort in protest, refusing to wear a protective mask of any kind. Sicker than that, or at least close second, is the fact custody staff assigned to in-cell food service continue to be in willful noncompliance with California Health and Safety Code 113969 **Hair Restraints** (see also 15CCCR 3052 (a)(f)). Consider the fact COVID-19 can be spread by asymptomatic carriers coughing, sneezing, talking or just breathing; common sense dictates — come on this isn't brain surgery! These disrespectful sows walk handcuffed prisoners by the arm anywhere they go. So much for social distancing — no mask plus no 6' social distancing equals: there's no math involved!

Here's another part of this Pestilence Pilot Program to be dissected: According to 15CCCR 3274 Inmate Count and Movement "At least one daily count shall be standing count wherein inmates shall stand at their cell door, or in a dormitory, shall sit... during the designated count time." So, if we just ignore 15CCCR 3271 which requires "The safe custody of the inmates confined..." Demanding close proximity in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic where CDC and California Health & Safety is being routinely ignored by the CDCR employees; it's just another day at the office for the disrespectful sow counting inmates in between counting sheep (that is, if they're not watching TV, playing cards, shooting baskets in the trash can or eating). Even among themselves, no masks, no social distancing, no respect and no common sense! Now here's the funny part: any prisoner **not** standing at the cell door to be

counter (and exposed) gets a **Disobeying A Direct Order** Rules Violation Report. Again, let's not consider 15CCCR 3274, oh, and that the cells are only about 10' x 4.5'. Unless the bars are blocked or the prisoner is under the bunk, one can be seen and accounted for. That old ostrich with the head in the sand trick can't be done!

And with that, the higher ups' newest window dressing display features distribution of a 27 March 2020 memo telling inmates "all individuals [who] enter a facility... showing any symptoms of respiratory illness are not permitted to enter" and "[w]e are doing all we can to keep everybody safe" and they "will continue to follow CDC guidelines for responding to COVID 19." (But not really.)

On 7 April 2020 the rotating yard schedule started up again. The only change is which side of East Block goes with the 1st tier of Donner. It's a "same shit different day" scenario. There continues to be disproportionate numbers of prisoners on the group yards, which is **not** conducive to facilitating social distancing. When it was suggested that group yards be ran in a manner similar to SMY (Small Management Yard or walk alone "W/A") it is met with mock confusion and resistance. There are around 100 prisoners assigned to W/A but there are only 31 cages (SMYs). So, to give all assigned to W/A a chance to go out, a list is made each morning by an assigned officer going cell to cell until the number of prisoners wishing to go meets the number of available cages. The next day the assigned officer begins the list where it became full the previous day. There is no reason the group yards should not be ran in similar fashion during the COVID-19 National Emergency. As employees should be wearing masks as recommended by CDC guidelines and the (A) Warden Broomfield 27 March 2020 memo claiming SQ employees must "Follow [CDC] guidelines for responding to COVID 19" shouldn't allow common sense to be swept under the rug. Getting into compliance with CDC guidelines and limiting the number of prisoners allowed on each of the 7 group yard to 30 makes sense under current conditions. Unfortunately, making sense proves to **not** be high on the SQ administration's list of priorities.

On 9 April 2020 the Director of the Center for Disease Control again announced that all employees (working in essential business) should be wearing cloth masks at all times. The CDCR22 [grievance form] sent to "AS of **Specialized Housing** (Death

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Prisoners Win Phone Rights During COVID-19 Restrictions

by USW27 of United Struggle from Within
April 2020

Abolitionists From Within (AFW) is back at you all with a little update on the struggle here at Calipatria State Prison A-Yard. CDCR and its C.O.s here have a corrupt culture of denying prisoners our rights. An issue was brought to my attention about prisoners in A2B class not receiving their phone calls during this time of war. The institution has been on a modified program to further promote social distancing in response to COVID-19.

Where there is oppression, it breeds resistance. The people must stand and the young mwenzi stood up and at the end had something to smile about. Privilege breeds complacency, so some mwenzi stood with hate in their eyes. I just love to see the peoples shine so i smile with the young mwenzi. C.O.s tried to take our constitutional rights from us because the prison officials were acting and behaving in a prejudiced manner toward the A2B class making aggravating remarks, dividing A1A against A2B, done in a retaliation for complaints by prisoners filed against guard misconduct. So we made that pen bleed back to normal program (everybody gets phone calls). Power to the People! ■

America, You Exposed the Line

by an Oklahoma prisoner

America, you exposed the line
Back in my younger days your judges
had their axes to grind
You promised us that justice was really
blind
But that is not what we would find
You just saw me as someone who was
born to do time
Yeah, I'm from Florida, the sunshine
state,
But you've sent me to prisons more
times than I've made it across the
sunshine gate
Unless i'm riding on the prison bus
Your green dollars all say "in God we
trust"
But to you I'm worth about a hundred
grand a year
And all the people that I know have all
passed through here
It's just how you keep the spirit cause
it's so strong-willed
So I turn on my TV and stare at the
screen
and it's a habitual liar named Trump
And he has big plans to buy a wall
But unfortunately that's not all
He also wants to split the families apart
And stop the Black & Brown people
from a better life and a fresh start

So I guess that the rumor is true
That the Black & Brown are not red,
white or blue
But I guess that's just america's plan
The rise of the Ku Klux Klan
That's spread all the way from the back
woods
And the secret meetings wearing white
hoods
And elevating them to become the police
Then the local judge, and even the
mayor of the big city
And then a department of corrections
union member
Funneling a percentage of their pay
To keep the disadvantaged people
locked up all day
By paying politicians and telling them
what to say
Like "we're tough on crime"
And then they pass a thousand laws at
a time
And have no respect for our civil rights
So we are doing lifetimes of wasted
days and wasted nights
But now I can clearly see through your
soulless eyes
And your great american white lies
But I vow to stop you from suppressing
my kind
Because yes america, you exposed the
line. ■

MIM Line on Labor Aristocracy: Liberating Truth or Depressing Reality?

by Wiawimawo of MIM(Prisons)
February 2020

As the launch of a new Maoist Internationalist Movement newsletter was scheduled to occur in the next week or so, we are addressing in part the events of the last 6 weeks that have delayed this project indefinitely. There were a series of splits, degenerations and internal struggles within our movement that came to a head last month. We are still assessing where things will fall, as we work to keep the prison ministry projects operating.

On 10 December 2019, remaining members of the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement announced, "After nearly 13 years of existence, the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement (RAIM) is no more. Contradicting lines and practical inadequacies have been allowed to fester to the point of intractability, resulting in several splits and the widespread abandonment of our organization."(1)

RAIM was our primary partner in the planned newsletter. There have been promises of more thorough assessments of RAIM's history and shortcomings, but the most detailed commentary right now is at the

link in the notes below. One of the key things it highlights is the challenges of revolutionary organizations to engage in the practice that allows us to learn from and bind ourselves to the masses in real struggle while in a non-revolutionary situation. There is a challenge in distinguishing ourselves in action, not just words, from the countless non-profits, non-governmental organizations, liberal reform groups and other bourgeois institutions misdirecting energy and resources from the struggles of oppressed people in this country.

The announcement from RAIM was followed shortly by the sudden resignation by a cadre member of MIM(Prisons). This loss seems to echo some experiences coming out of the RAIM camp, and this article is an attempt to analyze it in terms of phenomena that stem from our conditions in particular and that we must try to combat.

In contrast to some other struggles that had happened within MIM(Prisons) and within RAIM, this comrade who left MIM(Prisons) said ey had no political disagreements and therefore there was nothing to discuss or struggle over. In eir resignation ey stated, "I've come around to the belief that the humyn race is likely doomed at its own hand." Ey went on to say,

"I don't see a better political line out there, instead I see a problem with me and my First World conditions. I'm no longer able to rally the energy to continue contributing."

For some of us, this is a hard position to understand. For some of us there is no life free of despair outside of a committed struggle for a

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...SQ

Row) remains non-responsive and CDC guidelines regarding masks continue to be ignored just as all other CDCR22's on this and related topics have been since at least 29 March 2020. At this point in time the visiting restriction rules out the possibility any future infection to death row prisoners came from any source other than a CDCR employee **not** in compliance with CDC guidelines. Security cameras would reveal a few medical and custody staff do wear masks. It would also reveal most do **not**. Could this be an example of too little too late? It's definitely an example of CDCR staff endangering themselves **and** others in their custody. Death Row prisoners at San Quentin cannot spread COVID-19 among themselves until CDCR employees spread it to them first. ■

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world without oppression. However, we must understand that we live in a predominately petty bourgeois country, and what the class interests of that class is, and what its political outlook is. Only then can we understand and combat these types of conclusions.

On the one hand, it was mostly true that this comrade did not see a better political line. In fact, until eir last days with us ey was upholding that line in practice, even challenging others who were wavering in their own belief that Maoist organizing, in the form it took within our movement anyway, was the best way to struggle against oppression.

However, it was just a few weeks prior when i was editing an article this comrade had written reviewing the recent *Terminator* movie. In it ey had commented on capitalism marching towards the annihilation of nature and humyn life. I argued we should change the clause to "annihilation of the current balance of life on Earth that humyns depend on." The "annihilation of nature" is such an absolute concept that i'm not sure humyns could be capable of such a thing if they tried. Even the elimination of humyn life is an extreme outcome.

This seemingly subtle change hints at an underlying line struggle that emerged as em leaving the movement completely because ey thought "the humyn race is likely doomed at its own hand." This type of apocalyptic outlook is unfortunately common in our petty bourgeois culture. The petty bourgeoisie is a class whose purpose is based in consumption, leading to a different type of alienation than what Marx talked about (one that leads towards nihilism). And this is a truly First World problem that we should take seriously.

Whether it's lifelong communists retreating to the comforts of a consumer life built on the exploitation of the Third World, or imperialist warhawks attempting to literally initiate a biblical rapture, First World nihilism is a threat to humyn life. Whether it will kill off all of the humyn race aside, we sure know it kills a lot of us, and it is happening every day as long as imperialism stays in place.

There are two main forms of political degeneration that we see. There are those that abandon attempts at change to take up a bourgeois position as this comrade did. Then there are those who sneak bourgeois politics into their practice. The more obvious examples of the latter are comrades leaving to join single-issue reformist groups. The more insidious are those who take up a revisionist, or non-revolutionary line that

hides in Maoist clothing. Really there is only one form of political degeneration: it is the abandoning of proletarian politics for bourgeois politics in one form or another.

The fact that this comrade, who had served the people and upheld the proletarian line against attacks for so long, did not see eir decision as a disagreement in political line makes no sense. The MIM line is very clear that our strategic confidence comes from the 80% of the world's people who have a material interest predominately opposed to imperialism. Mao Zedong said that the imperialists were paper tigers, and proved in practice what that meant; that they are dangerous on the surface, but will collapse in the face of organized peoples' power. So clearly the comrade had disagreements with Maoist political line.

Apparently this comrade felt ey had made up eir mind and didn't want to engage in struggle anymore. This reminds me of the many times people have told me they don't listen to the news anymore because it just makes them depressed. And sure, I can relate to getting upset at times at things that I hear on the news. But most often I listen to the news with an open mind to understanding the world around me, the good and the bad. To stick one's head in the sand is easier than looking for answers. But if you are just getting depressed every time you listen to the news, it is because you are not engaged in the process of transforming our reality and/or you think humynity is doomed and there are no answers to the massive problems we are facing. To believe there are no answers is metaphysical thinking – ideas that things just are the way they are, or maybe even that humyn nature is just bad. This is religious/idealist thinking. And it is strange to come from a comrade who spent many years railing against religious and idealist thinking and advocating Maoism based in a historical materialist analysis of history.

Knowing what this comrade knew, the lie ey told, perhaps to emself, about not disagreeing with us politically, can only be explained as an excuse to do what this persyn subjectively wanted to do. If ey was being honest with us ey might have said something like "i feel that my life will be happier, more fulfilling, more rewarding by abandoning the struggle against oppression and imperialism." And i know what you're thinking, what kind of sick mind could think that? Well, we are surrounded by sick minds, present company included. Here in the belly of the beast, to seek out and uphold a proletarian position takes real effort and fortitude. It is going against all we are taught. And that is why this struggle to transform society is dialectically a struggle to transform ourselves. All the self-

help books and therapy sessions cannot transform us into the new socialist humyns we are striving to be. Only revolution can transform us to the point that we have eliminated this sickness.

Well, you say, aren't we in the First World hopeless then, because revolution is so far off? For one, revolutions happen quickly. It is true that our movement has been saying for decades that we do not live in revolutionary conditions. But that could change in a matter of months. And for the oppressed, crisis is opportunity, not the individualist, nihilist fantasy of the zombie apocalypse or the end of humynity that the petty bourgeois culture prophesizes.

Secondly, we do not have to achieve a stateless communist utopia to begin to transform ourselves. In fact, we transform every day. It is up to us whether we are training our brains to become more responsive to capitalist advertising and consumption or training ourselves to better embody the proletarian line and morality that leads us to struggle every day. That struggle defines us. And it impacts those around us. And together we lay the groundwork for a better tomorrow. Tomorrow can be better, a step in the right direction, or not. It is in the act of making revolution that we can cure the disease that has infested all our minds, and the system that requires unnecessary death and suffering to grease its wheels.

The recent events have created a significant shake up in our plans. These were long-term plans that were closely reaching their due date. Needless to say the setbacks have brought temporary disappointment and discouragement. At the same time we have been striving for a new path, and this shake up can help us get there.

We have already begun to transform our reality in recent weeks as we develop relationships with a number of new comrades. Even here, in the heart of empire, we know the number of potential comrades out there vastly outnumber what we have managed to unite to date. And we know it is our responsibility to be effective at what we do, to inspire the masses to join our movement. It will take us some more months to get back up to speed. And we don't foresee any newsletter coming out before that. But we are rebuilding. And we invite you to join us. ■

Note:

1. https://old.reddit.com/r/mao_internationalist/comments/e8wmjv/announcement_the_revolutionary_antiimperialist/

On the Passing of Comrade Prairie Fire

by MIM(Prisons)
March 2020

In a New Year's statement for 2020, llco.org stated:

"While we have much to celebrate, we also mourn the loss of a once dear comrade, who passed away earlier this year. Prairie Fire, who was integral to crafting our theory and authored many of our earlier articles, lost his battle with drug addiction this past April. Although he was expelled from our ranks in 2016, we still recognize and honor the important role he played in the formative years of our Organization."

2019 was certainly a year of loss and transformation for the Maoist movement in the United States.(1) While the Leading Light Communist Organization abandoned Maoism as such for its own self-aggrandizing brand shortly after forming, comrade Prairie Fire was someone who we had great unity with over the years. While our knowledge of eir work is somewhat limited, ey was someone who dedicated eir life to building a revolutionary movement.

Prairie Fire spent some time working with the Revolutionary Communist Party (USA) before being won over by the MIM critiques of the RCP=USA brand of revisionism. Prairie Fire, having been a student of Avakian's work, wrote some biting critiques of Avakian's writings for MIM.(2) In its later years, MIM came to promote the *It's Right to Rebel* (IRTR) online discussion forum as a place for Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist League comrades to organize. Prairie Fire was a lead figure in the IRTR project ideologically and work-wise. MC5, later revealed as Henry Park, would come to consider the IRTR a failure and proof that you cannot out-number the fascists and cops on a public internet forum.

Not long after the IRTR experiment had begun, the original MIM Comrades cell dissolved and the etext.org MIM website was left in the hands of lead theoretician Henry Park. By this time MIM had dropped most of the infrastructure related to the prison ministry into the hands of comrades who would come to form MIM(Prisons). One of those founding comrades came from IRTR.

Once Henry Park was on eir own, eir writings became more erratic, accusatory and difficult to decipher. It was at this time that Prairie Fire began leading the call to disassociate from MIM. Another key point of struggle was MC5's continued promotion of Mousnonya as the MIM Art Minister. MC5's failure to denounce Mousnonya, who participated in IRTR, was very concerning

for the core membership of IRTR. Comrades could not understand the free reign of creative license that seemed to be allowed to Mousnonya, whose content was inconsistent in its political message. While IRTR was condemned as a failure, swimming with fascists, MC5 hinted at other reasons for the Mousnonya relationship, but we don't know what those were. Unfortunately, Mousnonya videos are still prominent on YouTube's search when looking for MIM content.

Most of IRTR's core membership followed Prairie Fire in denouncing Henry Park as having lost it and went off to form Monkey Smashes Heaven (MSH) and associated projects. These projects eventually put out the *Sunrise Statement* declaring "Maoism Third-Worldism" as a new, higher stage of historical materialism, intentionally distancing themselves from MIM Thought. Comrades who formed MIM(Prisons) at that same time stood by the MIM legacy and the writings of Henry Park until eir early death in 2011.(3) We put online and continue to host the latest version of the MIM etext.org site that we had a copy of before it was shut down.

At the same time that IRTR was operating, the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement arose in Denver, organizing in alliance with MIM around support for Ward Churchill in eir fight for academic freedom, and anti-war and anti-militarism. As MSH wanted to go beyond online media and art projects, it morphed into an aspiring vanguard organization called the Leading Light Communist Organization. This group was active in Denver and included 2 comrades from RAIM-Denver on the central committee, with the intent of using the RAIM name and formation as the LLCO-led mass organization.

While MIM(Prisons) criticized the idea that there was a new stage of revolutionary science beyond Maoism, we saw the MSH alliance (and later LLCO) to generally uphold the MIM cardinal principles, even as they continued to find more aspects of MIM Thought and writings that they disagreed with. As the primary theoretician behind LLCO, we know Prairie Fire was a lead force in this continuous distancing from MIM.

Some time after forming LLCO, Prairie Fire decided that eir ideas had again become so distinct that they constituted a new



ideology, called "Leading Light Communism." Without discussion with other central committee members, LLCO abandoned "Maoism Third-Worldism" for "Leading Light Communism" as it continued to move its rhetoric in a direction that MIM(Prisons) found to be sectarian and dogmatic.(4) RAIM comrades in LLCO made a similar assessment, and soon split with LLCO, which in turn denounced RAIM as wreckers. At this point RAIM became a collective focused on a news blog at anti-imperialism.com without a clearly defined ideology. Over the years RAIM would go back to the "Maoist Third-Worldism" identity.

As membership changed, RAIM began to come around to the MIM(Prisons) position on a new stage of revolutionary science. In its last years, RAIM was in regular discussions with MIM(Prisons), regarding plans to launch joint projects under the MIM name. As RAIM has since been dissolved, comrades who have followed the MIM(Prisons) and RAIM legacies continue to work towards a reconsolidation of the MIM.

After a struggle with LLCO over its gender analysis in 2014,(5) MIM(Prisons) paid little attention to LLCO as practical alliance had reached an impasse. While the nature of its activity was unclear to us, it seemed focused on leading struggles in the Third World. Essentially, it had gone full circle due to seeing the center of world revolution in the Third World, and it had taken up a Trotskyist strategy of leading Third World organizing from the First World. Prairie Fire had gone back to the ways of Bob Avakian.

According to the recent statement from LLCO, Prairie Fire was expelled from the organization in 2016 for drug use. It was around this time that Prairie Fire reached out to us to notify us that LLCO had been usurped by enemies, and ey was regrouping around a formation called "the Founders." That was the last we heard from Prairie Fire.

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How Do We Protect Prisoners' Names and Info?

by MIM(Prisons)
April 2020

A South Carolina prisoner writes:
"Why did one of the coordinating members unexpectedly leave MIM(Prisons)? We should be informed on his/her departure because he/she do know our names in the group."

This is a good question. We explained why ey left the best we can in an article on the comrade's defection.(see p. 14)

As to your concern about the info that this comrade had, it is a valid concern, and one we are always thinking about. The persyn who left MIM(Prisons) was a long-time cadre-level member who had access to information on a need-to-know basis, which

included subscribers' names, addresses and communication records. But as discussed in the article, ey left for some kind of nihilism and sense of defeat, and ey still feels like ey agrees with what we are doing. So we are confident in saying there is no ill-will there.

Over the existence of our organization we have constantly improved the security of our organization and specifically the security of our subscribers' information. There have been at least 4 major technological leaps in our tracking of your info in our over 10 years of existence. We are confident in saying that our information is more secure than any other organization that you may write to, and about as secure as it could possibly be while still using computers connected to the internet.

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...Prairie Fire

As our movement is in a period of great transition and transformation, we wanted to take this opportunity to document some of this history now that people have passed and organizations have dissolved.

We also wanted to comment on Prairie Fire's passing because we saw em as a fellow traveler, despite our differences over the years. While eir practice was not really known to us in much detail, we had respect for eir ideas and eir efforts. Certainly more than most organizations out there. So it is sad that we learn of eir passing.

It is also sad when we hear that a comrade had succumbed to drug addiction. Developing healthy lives in this sick system is a challenge, to say the least. That is why we have comrades currently developing a program for those dealing with addiction and other challenges related to being healthy in an imperialist society that we are struggling against. And we welcome help and input from comrades on this project, as we strive to Serve the People in addressing the effects of this society on the individual. The transformation of the individual is only actualized in the individual contributing to the transformation of society.

We post the images of Prairie Fire above to commemorate and remember em. Yet it is not because of eir appearance or life story that we are writing on eir death. We are critical of eir efforts to build a cult of persynality around emself. Promoting eir image and eir persynal history is promoting pre-scientific thinking. We must be real with the people. We must strike a balance between those who see themselves as great, and make great statements, and those who

shy from the vanguard role and deny revolutionary truths. We must be clear and honest about what we know, and what we are doing, and what we don't know, and what we are not accomplishing.

At times it seemed that Prairie Fire was always striving to distinguish emself as having done something new and different, falling into the trap of post-modernism that ey emself condemned. We are not in revolutionary times. We can not have the impact or discover the truths that Mao or Lenin did in our current conditions. We mustn't strive to be the next Mao or Lenin. We must strive to be humble, dedicated servants of the people; always struggling and striving in the direction of revolutionary transformation of society, as so many millions of people who came before us have done. We are a part of something great. We are doing great things. There is nothing great about us as individuals.

Prairie Fire was a leader. Overall ey led people in the right direction, though at times ey led people away from MIM Thought. We should strive to unite with all who are in agreement with MIM's three cardinal principles. These are what distinguish us as Maoists, that are moving in the overall direction toward a world without oppression. ■

Notes:

1. Wiawimawo of MIM(Prisons), February 2020, MIM Line on Labor Aristocracy: Liberating Truth or Depressing Reality?
2. Prairie Fire critique's Conquer the World, also see our RCP study pack
3. Soso of MIM(Prisons), September 2011, Henry Park Obituary: MIM Comrade and Devoted Revolutionary, Under Lock & Key issue 22.
4. MIM(Prisons), March 2012, Review: Monkey Smashes Heaven 1 & 2.
5. Wiawimawo of MIM(Prisons), November 2014, A Scientific Definition of Rape and Why the Gender Aristocracy is Important, Under Lock & Key issue 41.

Other than the technical side of security is the humyn side. We organize our movement in a hierarchical way. People must work their way up the ladder, and information is released on a need-to-know basis. Comrades must put in work to get access to any information. So even if they do do harm, we try to make sure they are doing more good for the movement.

We recently put out documents outlining a new mass organization called Anti-Imperialist Prisoner Support (AIPS). In those documents we outline the hierarchy of supporters, member, leaders and cadre. Cadre is the highest level, and would be full members of MIM(Prisons) or other Maoist cells. We have the same hierarchy within United Struggle from Within for our comrades inside, except that cadre-level prisoners cannot join MIM(Prisons) for security reasons. (Since the state can read our mail or listen to our phone calls, there is no way to have democratic centralism with cadre while they are still in prison.)

Our latest iteration of technological improvements was a major achievement that was just launched over the last couple months. It involved allowing supporters and members, working as AIPS, to help us with work like typing reports we receive from prisoners on conditions and organizing, articles and study group responses. This is done in a way where our subscribers' identity and persynal information is completely inaccessible to these AIPS comrades. In fact, that persynal info physically cannot be "hacked" into from the information that these comrades have.

Even within the different levels of commitment outlined above, we have instituted different levels of access to information. It is all handled on a need-to-know basis and based on one's quality of work and proven commitment to the movement. For example, members of AIPS have begun to participate in the introductory study group that you are also doing right now. And from the people that complete it, we will invite AIPS supporters to respond to imprisoned comrades' answers to help both parties develop their political consciousness. This will be a level of political responsibility and access that must be earned.

Back to the comrade that left MIM(Prisons). As soon as ey left, we cut off eir access to all of our digital information and accounts. Most importantly, we released a new gpg key. We use gpg to encrypt our email and confirm our messages are officially from us. So anyone emailing us should use our new gpg key to ensure that anyone with

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HRDC Forces Arizona DOC to Define Censorship Rules

by Soso of MIM(Prisons)
November 2019

In November 2019, the U.S. District Court ruled that the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) must "establish bright-line rules that narrowly define prohibited content in a manner consistent with the First Amendment." These rules must be defined by mid-February. This ruling comes after years of censorship of a variety of publications by the ADC, often as a result of arbitrary decisions from mailroom staff.

In this case *Prison Legal News* (PLN) (a project of the Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC)) filed a lawsuit in 2015 challenging the censorship of its newsletter for "sexually explicit" content. Ironically, the content that inspired this censorship was describing non-consensual sexual contact between guards and prisoners. And as most readers know, PLN is primarily a legal resource for prisoners fighting injustices like this prison rape.

Arizona bans a variety of publications, including issues of *National Geographic*, *Men's Health*, and *GQ*.

Issues of *Under Lock & Key* are also on this banned list, though not for sexually explicit material. In the case of *ULK*, the most recent ban (that we know about) is *ULK* 63 from July/August 2018, which was banned for "Incite, Aide, Abet Riots, Work Stoppages, Means of Resistance." Many other issues of *ULK* sent to subscribers in Arizona are returned or rejected without

reasons given. Our attempt to appeal this ban of *ULK* 63, requesting the ADC provide more evidence than these vague claims resulted in the following response: "The pages identified containing such content are throughout, including, but not limited to, pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 17."

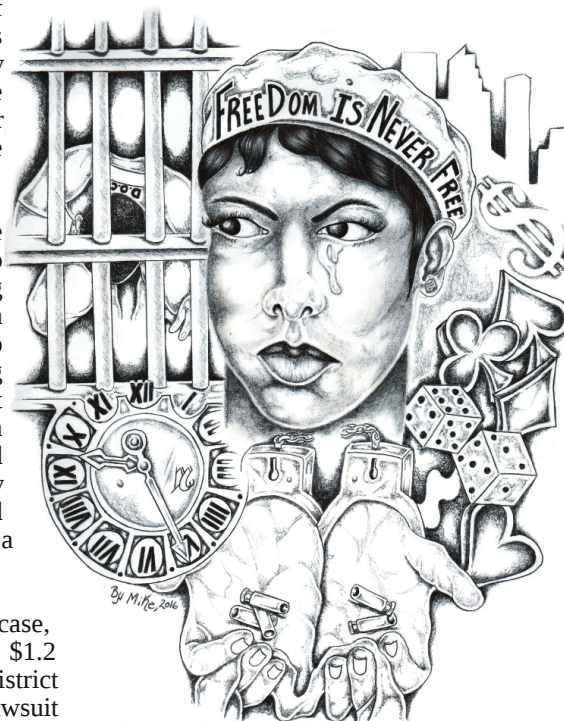
In an example of their arbitrary decisions around censorship, a MIM(Prisons) six-page guide to forming a prisoner-led study group was censored in 2016 because it supposedly "Promotes superiority of one group over another/promotes racism/degradation." This is exactly what MIM(Prisons) fights against: the superiority of one group of people over another. And this is exactly what the criminal injustice system promotes.

This court ruling requires the Arizona Department of Corrections to change the mail policy from allowing DOC staff to use their discretion when determining what's banned and to establish consistency in excluding sexually explicit material. This won't help MIM(Prisons) as it is rare that a prison claims *ULK* should be censored for sexually explicit material. But any progress towards less censorship and more narrowly-defined policies is a good thing.

On 22 October, in a different case, *Prison Legal News* was awarded \$1.2 million in attorney fees by a Federal district court in Florida after a nine-year lawsuit

over censorship of PLN publication because of ads for phone services, pen-pals and stamps. This victory came after the Supreme Court refused to take up the final appeal of this PLN ban.(1) This resulted in the case remanding back to the district court for a ruling on the attorneys' fees. Basically this means PLN won on their Due Process claims but lost on their First Amendment claims. So the censorship is still legal, but the DOC failed to follow proper censorship policy.

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Former Cops in USW?

by a Pennsylvania prisoner
April 2020

I note that MIM/USW expresses an inclusive philosophy when it comes to prisoners and victims of oppression. Does this mindset include former corrections officers, former police officers, etc. who are now incarcerated?

I ask this specifically because I've personally known of at least two former corrections officers who are now prisoners in PADOC. One is actually in the control unit I am currently housed in.

Funny thing is, he was made a "block worker" within days of arriving on the unit, which affords him privileges to the point that he is hardly ever in his cell and can pretty much do as he pleases in all regards, while the rest of us are 23 and 1 or 24 hr. lockdown and are EXTREMELY restricted in everything we do. So, just curious on your outlook on this.

MIM(Prisons) responds: Anyone can be a cop and anyone can be a revolutionary, no matter their background. In the United States we operate surrounded by enemies. So we must take proper precautions. We also believe that anyone can be transformed, but some people will take a lot more work. And without real power, people with strong anti-people ideas will not be worth our time to try to change right now.

This former C.O. sounds like a typical pig, and just because their clothes have changed it doesn't sound like their mentality has. Just like a prisoner who is a rat for the admin, we look at a person's political practice to see where their loyalties lie. We wouldn't consider either of these types of people to be members of United Struggle from Within, which works for the destruction of the Amerikkkan criminal injustice system, the end of the United States, and a world where everyone is free from oppression! ■

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...Info Access

our old gpg key cannot read our messages. Using the new gpg key provides extra certainty that you are only communicating with current members of MIM(Prisons).

In this era, people are more aware than ever about the susceptibility of their personal information being sucked up and used by all kinds of powers that be. For revolutionaries this can become a life or death concern, and is certainly a concern of success or failure. Only recently have we seen other organizations and movements begin to talk about the kind of practices that MIM was once mocked for. While most of what we're saying here you just need to take our word for, we do think our historical practice around security culture speaks to the seriousness with which we take the work that we are doing. And we commend you (the comrade who asked this question) for also taking these things seriously. ■

The Censorship Is Real!

by a Minnesota prisoner
December 2019

Not many people understand what censorship is. They may have a vague concept based on the albums sold at Wal-Mart that block out cuss words, but they have no clue as to how deep censorship really goes. And that's mostly because of the censorship in and of itself. You can't hear about what is suppressed. And this has been happening ever since words were created.

I am currently dealing with illegal censorship of at least three publications. Each of them has a few different things in common. One: They are all free to prisoners. Two: They are all political news oriented. Three: They are all against the prison industrial complex in any of its forms. Four: They are all being sent to a prisoner who has filed a Civil Suit against the Minnesota Department of Corrections: Myself.

This all started after I filed under the 42 § 1983 for guards messing me up in my last facility. All of my legal mail was opened outside of my presence before being given to me. Then they started refusing to send out mail seeking counsel to national organizations if it was in a sealed envelope. I had a stack of over 30 envelopes that clearly indicated that they were legal correspondence. So I went through the chain of command, and anyone who's ever dealt with that already knows the outcome of the subsequent grievance & grievance appeal: staff denied all wrongdoing.

See, I'm not stupid. I have all the DOC Policy in my cell. I keep a full legal bin of State and Federal Law along with citations of case decisions. And even when I showed these fools every piece of where they violated not only their own policy, but Minnesota and United States Law, they only

had this to say: "Well, if I have to go to Court, I guess I will." That was the Discipline Sgt. Glen Lissow as I showed him all of the evidence.

So after proving that the internal grievance system was completely useless, I filed a Civil Action in the District Court, only for the Judge Gregory G. Galler to deem it frivolous, and that I did not state a legal claim. Two months go by, and then I receive a notice that I am receiving a discipline for lying/misrepresentation. I was literally getting punished for filing a lawsuit against the DOC. Under Minnesota Law, this is only permissible if you lied, or filed a malicious lawsuit. I did neither; you figure that one out.

After that bit of nonsense, I received another astonishing piece of mail. A Non-Delivery Notice stating that the newspaper *The Abolitionist* was being censored due to it allegedly constituting a risk to the safety and security of the facility, with no further explanation. Again, I know the policy, and so I filed an appeal, which was to be forwarded to the Correspondence Review Authority (CRA). But, instead of following Policy, the Mailroom Lead Worker Natalie Leseman, responded to the appeal.

So I had to go up to her supervisor, Lt. Jason R. Hills, and cite the Policy and the Law only for him to also not follow policy and to reply to the appeal rather than forward it to the CRA. So finally, I had to mail it to the damn CRA myself. Anyone want to hazard a guess as to their response?

The Correspondence Review Authority, comprised of Chris Pawelk-AWO, Sherlinda Wheeler-AWA, and Byron Matthews-Captain, stated that they had read the material and determined the content should be denied for violating MN DOC Division Directive 301.030 Contraband because one of the articles allegedly advocates for

organized disturbances within prison walls and activities in violation of facility rules.

Obviously, we all know this is not adequate to legally censor material, plus, it's complete bullshit. So I used the second appeal and sent it to the Assistant Commissioner of Corrections, Nate Knutson. Confusingly, his reply was that the newspaper had a graphic depiction of violence and that that was why it had been denied.

While this was taking place, I received another Notice of Non-Delivery for a publication from MIM Distributors in San Francisco, CA alleging it was a "Risk to Safety & Security of Facility." And again no further explanation was given. So I began the whole process anew. And again, Lt. Jason R. Hills failed to forward the appeal. And then the CRA failed to respond within the time permitted by Policy, and I am still awaiting word back from Nate Knutson.

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...PLN

"Free speech isn't free," said Human Rights Defense Center executive director Paul Wright. "In this case, censorship by the Florida Department of Corrections cost state taxpayers almost \$1.2 million — because of the vicious efforts by the prison system to censor HRDC's publications. The Attorney General's office spent over 3,000 hours in attorney time fighting this case. The real tragedy is that Florida prisoners remain unable to read *PLN* and other HRDC publications that will educate and inform them of their rights."(2)

PLN and the HRDC have done a lot to fight censorship in prisons over the years. And their hard work on this front benefits everyone seeking to help educate and organize prisoners. This censorship, and failures in the courts prove a point we often make: there are no rights, only power struggles.

Censorship is one of the biggest barriers to our work with prisoners. And it's an area where we always need more help, both from jailhouse lawyers and from lawyers on the streets. If your mail is censored, **APPEAL IT**, and get in touch with us and let us know. We will send you a guide to fighting censorship and sometimes we can assist on our end with an appeal to the prison. And lawyers on the streets get in touch and help us with these battles! ■

Notes:

1. Under Lock & Key 67, January 2019, Supreme Court Denies *PLN* Censorship Appeal.
2. Prison Legal News, 25 Oct 2019, Federal court awards \$1.2 million in fees in HRDC Florida DOC censorship case, *PLN* press release.

No Postage Stamps Allowed on Michigan Mail

by MIM(Prisons)
March 2020

Our most recent censorship notice came from GOA T. Bates at Thumb Correctional Facility in Michigan. The reason our mail was censored? "MAIL - WITH LABEL AND POSTAGE STAMP". So you can send mail to prisoners in Michigan as long as you don't put a postage stamp on it. Do they understand how the postal service works?

Of course they do. Violations of our First Amendment rights for illogical reasons is common occurrence here in these United Snakes. There are no rights that we don't

stand up for and defend. Right now we are behind on fighting censorship battles, and we could use your help in increasing the pressure on such egregious cases as this.

See our prison censorship database (online) for examples of protest letters, alegal/caselaw page for existing court precedents. Please email us any letters you send, or let us know about any phone calls you make. We are eager to help people, especially friends and family of our subscribers, join in our anti-censorship efforts! All this can be found online at www.prisoncensorship.info ■

Feds Threatening First Amendment with New Policies

by a Federal prisoner
March 2020

I am writing you this letter to bring to your attention a serious situation that is about to occur at this facility. On 16 March 2020, the Acting Warden is about to implement a Draconian, repressive, and extremely restrictive mail policy. This policy *DOES NOT* conform to the Code of Federal Regulations and is in violation of the United States Postal Regulation.

This policy includes the ability to arbitrarily censor a prisoner's mail without warning and without providing any notification that it is being done. This new policy affects *ALL* General Correspondence, which includes letters from families, the courts, religious organizations, financial institutions, and every other type of correspondence that is not a newspaper, magazine, or book.

The institution is using the influx of "spice" (synthetic marijuana) as an excuse to enact this policy. A review of the existing Code of Federal Regulations already gives the institution authority to place a specific prisoner on a restrictive mail policy for specific reasons (such as introducing or using drugs). This new policy affects everybody, even though the population that is abusing the drugs is less than 5%.

Also, the local warden shouldn't be allowed to enact new rules at the local level. I wish to provide an example. Let's say that every local postmaster could enact local rules. A postmaster in San Francisco could raise the postage by \$0.15 per stamp. A postmaster in Chicago could end deliveries on Saturdays. A postmaster in New York could dictate that only mail weighing less than 10oz can be delivered. If every local

postmaster could enact their own postal rules at whim, this would completely disrupt the delivery of mail across the country, and I am certain the public wouldn't allow it.

The most egregious rules are:

1. All correspondence must be on white paper and in white envelopes, or it will be rejected. The problem with this is that most courts, and many businesses, mail documents in manila envelopes.

2. All accepted correspondence and photos will be removed from the envelopes and photocopied. The photocopy will be delivered to the prisoner and the originals will be destroyed. Basically, the Acting Warden has changed the rules so that he can destroy your property without your permission. How can a prisoner know if something even arrived? The mailroom can simply destroy it and no one would be the wiser. There is no law or federal rule which authorizes the warden to open up people's mail and make photocopies. Think of the privacy concerns. Suddenly the institution is now storing a digital copy of your private mail somewhere. Are they keeping this in a database for future review?

I ask the reader to think of the importance of photos in your life. Childhood photos, wedding photos, graduation photos, vacation photos, etc. For prisoners who cannot have visits and are locked up for decades, photos are the single most important way to convey information of loved ones. To simply replace a quality photo with a cheap photocopy completely diminishes this important visual connection AND since there is *NO EVIDENCE* that photos can be used to hide drugs, this new rule is arbitrary and capricious and only

serves to increase the hardships and burdens of being in prison.

You (the public) pay the United States Post Office (USPS) a fee to deliver the mail to the recipient (prisoner). The prisoner has signed a *CONTRACT* with the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to allow them to open and check the envelope for contraband, then deliver the envelope with the contents. Now the Warden is violating the terms of this contract without having the prisoner sign a new contract.

Since this is a *NEW RULE*, *ONLY* the agency itself can make this type of change. In order to do so the agency *MUST* submit the proposed rule change to the Director of the Federal Register, who will publish it so the public can review and comment on the changes. If each local Warden can suddenly change the rules without following this process, what stops them from limiting the number of hours to access religious services, visiting, or access to medical services?

3. All correspondence shall have no more than five pieces of white, single-sided, 8.5" x 11" paper per envelope. A person can currently mail much more than 5 pieces of paper in an envelope at a cost of \$0.15 per additional ounce. This new rule effectively increases the cost to send any additional ounces to \$0.55. This will negatively impact the poor.

Also, many organizations, legal firms, businesses, *NEED* to send in more than 5 pages, or print on both sides. This new policy will allow the Warden unlimited power to arbitrarily reject mail he doesn't like (ACLU, Prison Legal News, etc.), under the guise that it violates the page limit rule. Again, there is no security risk to printing on both sides of a piece of paper or mailing more than 5 pieces in the same envelope.

4. All incoming correspondence shall have envelopes which *DO NOT* have mailing labels. All addresses must be written in ink. Many organizations, legal firms, businesses utilize mailing labels to reduce costs. Again, this policy allows the Warden to arbitrarily reject mail that he doesn't want.

These are just *SOME* of the new rules the acting warden plans on implementing on 16 March 2020. This will have numerous negative effects upon *BOTH* the public and the prison population. Further, if local wardens are suddenly granted the power to create any new rule they desire, without going through the proper process, then the entire federal system can be abused by a local authority, *WITHOUT THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE!!* The Warden *ALREADY*

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...Censorship

The CRA did finally reply 15 days late, saying literally nothing of substance. And now I am awaiting to be approved to proceed In Forma Pauperis for a Civil Action against these poohbahs again.

But all this goes to show the lengths to which those who seek to oppress those with differing views, or who are in opposition, are willing to go. These people are willing to stake their livelihoods on performing illegal acts to people in prison, just to shut us up. And 90% of the time, they succeed.

When there are no witnesses, and no one to speak out, this type of thing goes

unnoticed, and unpunished. You know they say absolute authority corrupts absolutely. If I can suppress your voice, your mail, your movements, your very life, no one will notice until you're gone for good. Censorship is men playing god, and you're only hearing about it because it was allowed to be said. Let that sink in.

MIM(Prisons) responds: Much respect to this comrade for all his work fighting the censorship in his prison. The other reason you are hearing about this censorship case is because of the independent newspaper and website run by MIM(Prisons). You won't read about this stuff in the mainstream press. This underscores the importance of these independent institutions. ■

Build Unity with Queer Prisoners

by a Texas prisoner
April 2020

First of all I would like to say that I truly admire the work that you all are doing. Even though I am somewhat new to the cause, I know that I am definitely headed in the right direction. At this point, I don't feel qualified to contribute any articles that would be worth publication. There is so much that I would like to learn from you so that I will be in a better position to write for *ULK*. I am a teacher and a writer at heart and I definitely plan on providing you with work contributions in the future. In the meantime, I will offer a few comments on an article found in *ULK* 56. The article is titled "Building Unity Through Talk", by Soso of MIM(Prisons).

Being incarcerated for over 13 years, I have seen what hatred and division does to prisoners. What I love about MIM(Prisons) is the fact that you all not only encourage peace & unity among prisoners, but you also labor to help them to see the bigger picture of what's going on "behind the scenes." Oppressed nations are frustrated and they don't realize why they are so upset. MIM(Prisons) helps us to see that the real problem is found in the overarching imperialist system rooted in capitalism, not each other.

The article speaks about contradictions with the enemy and contradictions among the people, and it goes on to describe the best way to deal with both. "When we run into problems with people who should be our allies," the article states, "we need to start from [the] desire for unity." If oppressed

nations would stop and take a moment to see that the system is designed to bring disunity among the people, and that this is really a divide-and-conquer strategy used by the bourgeoisie to ensure their continued ability to exploit the proletariat, only then will we see how important maintaining unity is when it comes to revolutionary struggle.

As a bisexual man in prison, I see other oppressed nations attacking the LGBTQ community (verbally and physically) as if we are the enemy. But as this article rightly points out, the marginalization of queer and trans folk is actually characteristic of imperialist oppressors and the patriarchy. The more oppressed nations are able to see that there are certain mindsets that are counterproductive to revolutionary struggle, the more they will be able to channel their energies in a positive direction that will lead to true change. I believe the greatest strength of MIM(Prisons) lies in its push for unity, peace, growth, internationalism, and independence (otherwise known as the five principles of the United Front for Peace in Prisons).

I can't help but to notice that this country is slowly moving in a more socialist direction, and I believe that is because people are starting to become disillusioned with the imperialist agenda. Unity and education is the key to keeping the momentum going, and anything that undermines that unity needs to be identified and exposed for what it is (which I believe MIM(Prisons) does a good job at). Thank you

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... Continued from prev. page ... **Feds** has UNDER EXISTING POLICY to reject ANY Correspondence if it is deemed to have contraband. What ISN'T ALLOWED is for the Warden to REJECT the Correspondence of ALL PRISONERS simply because of the Warden's belief that contraband COULD be in a particular piece of mail.

As prisoners, we are often forgotten. Everybody hears and sees the stories of family separation of people from other countries at our border. But what about the ongoing family separation of our citizens confined within our prisons? As prisoners confined within these prison walls, our resources are limited to fight this "EXTREMELY RESTRICTIVE" mail policy. Most prisoners want to take action but worry about being harassed and retaliated against by staff when they make their complaints known. I know this from personal experience. MY personal property has been gone through and destroyed. My mail is being

rejected or "lost." I have been threatened with sanctions and retaliatory transfer.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!! Please contact your local federal representative (Congressperson or Senator), the Western Regional Director, The BOP Director, the Director of the Federal Register, the Postmaster General, post this to your Facebook page, make your feelings known on Twitter, contact a media representative and ask them to investigate, make a request to a civil rights organization (ACLU, FAMM, etc.) or a religious organization and ask for their assistance.

MIM(Prisons) adds: For those of us involved in supporting prisoners we know that the First Amendment rights to free speech and association are a constant battle in this country. Fighting censorship in prisons and combating the unaccountable grievance system where prisoners are punished for voicing such concerns are part of defending

the basic civil rights of oppressed peoples here in these United States.

These petty rules, like the Michigan prison that recently censored our mail for having postage stamps on it, are a blatant effort to silence certain voices and to needlessly deprive prisoners of the things that can help them.

FCI Lompoc can be contacted at:
3600 GUARD ROAD
LOMPOC, CA 93436
Email: LOX/ExecAssistant@bop.gov
Phone: 805-736-4154

We encourage people to write and call to express their concerns about the proposed policies. It seems that they may have already gone into place based on the timeline our comrade provided above. We will update this article as we find out more. Please email us with your updates or any reports on your attempts to contact the BOP on this issue. ■

Ambivalence in Texas

by a Texas prisoner
January 2020

I have been trying to organize a new group but I am failing. People here want things done but don't want to do it themselves. I help with what I can. They don't want to grievance the officers because they are worried about retaliation. In short, they are scared of a case and not making commissary.

I am fighting them and putting paper whenever I can. Shortly after I received my packet of Texas campaign materials, I got a frivolous case for failing to go to work. I was on my way to my wing from work and didn't make it out the door. I had two offenders, a sergeant, and a kitchen captain as witnesses. The lieutenant running the case said that he didn't give a f*** and that I was guilty. This was in May.

I filed a Step 1 but never got an answer. I did a I-60 request for the Step 1 grievance number. I got it with a request for a 40-day extension, 89 days after I filed the grievance and 11 days after I requested it, but predated for the week before I requested it by I-60. I did file a Step 2 without the Step 1 attached (I never got the Step 1) in October 2019.

I can't wait to hear from Huntsville and the Ombudsman over all of this. Since I have no family out there, they are trying to ignore me. I refuse to go away.

... Continued from prev. page ... **Unity**
for the work that you do and I look forward to studying and struggling with you all.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This comrade demonstrates that it doesn't take special training to contribute articles that are worthwhile. By analyzing the conditions where ey is at, ey offers some universal observations around the topic of unity.

While we certainly hope the efforts of building public opinion for socialism are paying off, we think it's unlikely that this country is actually moving in a socialist direction economically, as this author states above. With the coronavirus having an undeniable impact on capitalism's status quo, it is a good opportunity to continue pushing for socialist change.

History shows us that to put an end to capitalism we will need a revolution. It won't be a slow move towards socialism, but rather a violent revolution to overthrow capitalism. The capitalists won't give up without a fight!

One thing we want to clarify about this

In the meantime, I will keep writing and fighting this injustice System that we are in. I will keep sharing my Texas Pack. I could use some group information that might help me if I can get one going again. They want to but don't want to. I don't get it.

MIM(Prisons) responds: We commend this comrade for sticking up for eirself, and "staying committed even when your homies ain't with it" (shout out to Dead Prez). Even though it can be totally baffling and frustrating when people want to but don't want to, know that you're not alone in facing that challenge. Prison life is designed to make people ambivalent (or even completely disinterested) and handling that ambivalence is all part of the process of building for revolution and a new society. Accepting it as just part of the process can help us to not get frustrated by it.

We had a lot of discussion about the topic of how to organize people who are ambivalent in ULK 66, which was on the topic of Recruitment and Retention for Revolution. We are sending this comrade a copy of that ULK and a few more to study and share. And we encourage everyone to continue to send us updates on what it's like in the facility where you're held. We publicize conditions reports on our website www.prisoncensorship.info, and conditions reports about organizing help us consolidate and support the national liberation struggles developing inside United Snakes prisons. In Struggle! ■

article is who is the proletariat and who is exploited, because this is a very common point of confusion especially among our new subscribers. Where this author is discussing oppressed nations in prison succumbing to divide-and-conquer tactics, and helping oppressed nations realize capitalism's main interests is in exploiting the proletariat, we want to clarify who is the proletariat. For the most part the oppressed nations within U.S. borders are not exploited and not proletarian. Many people in oppressed nations belong to the lumpen (that's who is locked up in prison and hustling on the streets), labor aristocracy, and even the bourgeoisie. Some migrants are in the proletarian class, and some people are in the semi-proletariat. For the most part people in oppressed nations in U.S. borders are not proletarian and are not economically exploited.

We have a lot of study materials about different classes and their roles in capitalism and imperialism. Simply send us a work-trade and a request and we'll get something out to you about it!

We also look forward to continuing to develop with our newer comrades! We're inspired by letters like this every day. ■

On Cyntoia Brown

by Legion of United Struggle from Within
July 2019

Fifteen years ago she was in a desperate situation and in an unfortunate set of circumstances. From afar we have watched Comrade Brown show and prove to the world over that consistency, education, solidarity and a set of principles not unlike our own can literally tear down the walls of the oppressive state apparatus.

Most peoples and folks would overlook the struggle of a misled youth in favor of the more traditional political prisoner, but, when we saw that our comrade was free we had to inform the masses of eir struggle. #she2 is Legion.

To be *Legion* you must have been about that life at one point. To be *Legion* you must have become the change you wanted to see. You could be a Freed Cyntoia Brown or a captive ME.

She beat the patriarchal system that told her that she would do 51 years for killing a trick who tried to rape her while under capitalism. She was forced into prostitution by a pimp that coerced her into the underground commercial sex economy without any input from her.

While she sat in prison she didn't waste time. She got her education, she got a degree, she advocated for her freedom turning her cell into her dormitory. She went from the state pen to Penn State.

We hope for the best for Comrade Brown as she begins her life on release. She too knows the struggle the pain of the road less traveled, and we humbly salute her with universal greetings of PEACE!

MIM(Prisons) adds: Cyntoia Brown is an inspiration as to what the oppressed nation lumpen youth can overcome and accomplish. Her case is one where gender, class and national oppression all came into play leading Cyntoia to the traumatic experiences of her early life. These experiences were a consequence of gender oppression on her as

Continued on next page...

Our **Spanish translations** of current articles are on hold at this time. Write in to get old MIM lit and previous ULK articles in Spanish!

Send a donation for printing and postage, or a contribution to ULK for work-trade.

They Need a Healer

by Nairobi Antari of USW
May 2020

After reading the article "34 years too long: The case of Political Prisoner Dr. Mutulu Shakur" in the *San Francisco BayView* newspaper, Feb. 2020 issue, plus watching the news on the current events on the coronavirus epidemic, I can't help but laugh and wonder; Is this pay back for locking up and killing our New Afrikan healers? As a young New Afrikan who grew up listening to and admiring the late Tupac Shakur, knowing that Pac came from a revolutionary background, when given a chance to study Dr. Mutulu Shakur deeper, I took it and was astonished that he co-founded the BAAANA (Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America).

It pisses me off how Dr. Mutulu was framed and is still locked up after serving his 30-year sentence unrightfully. Just as much as

... Continued from previous page

...**Brown**

not only a biological female, but also a young persyn. The lack of development of youth make them more subject to gender oppression in patriarchal society. Such experiences will often mark and change a persyn's life. And we celebrate those like Cyntoia who come out of those experiences as a strong, educated organizer for the interests of the oppressed.

Unfortunately, we know countless Cyntoia Browns as Legion implies. And they do not have celebrities working on their freedom campaign. Some of them will spend the rest of their lives in prison. This is the difference between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, that we live under now, which keeps the leaders of the oppressed locked up; as compared to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that we need, which will recognize those who take up the cause of the oppressed to be reformed contributors to society.

The risk is cases like Brown's making it look like the U.S. injustice system also recognizes such contributors, as if Brown was released because the government recognized eir value to society, and not simply because of public pressure. Again, there are many Browns who are still languishing in prison because they didn't get the public support, weren't "newsy" enough, etc. And there will be many more if we don't put an end to the patriarchal society that so often leads youth into dangerous situations.

We are grateful Comrade Brown is released and still fighting the good fight, and we have a lot more work to do. ■

the killing of Dr. Sebz, America doesn't want to heal individuals not without capitalizing on it. Now we're in a period where all the natural healers are needed, and this epidemic of the coronavirus has individuals in the multitudes fearing for their lives. Due to the Surgeon General claiming there's no cure and advise individuals to self-quarantine if they have symptoms that coincides with COVID-19. But where's the natural healers now? In prison cells or 6 feet under the ground. For every action there's a consequence and here's the Imperialistic-Capitalistic world consequence for murdering and imprisoning our Brothers and Sisters.

I know that if the United States didn't do the evil wrong doings to the New Afrikan community and strayed away from the natural way of life, as a whole we would be better off like the majority of the continent of Afrika. Now Amerikkka is going into her rapist tool box and do what it does best, which is blood suck whoever has the cure dry then dispose of the evidence.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammed wrote about the Fall of Amerikkka and said the worst is yet to come. How shit is looking now, the worst is just beginning to happen to Amerikkka the great. As the New Afrikan nation is in motion to free our Brothers and

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...**UFPP**

chains when utilized to the fullest, but so many of us only attain the base stage of consciousness or the second stage of subconscious and go no further. So many of us attain all this knowledge on our quest for truth, only to use it to know more than the next man. But how many of us are using our knowledge to help win lawsuits, win appeals, and other battles that build upon our independence from this paternalistic system? I constantly see pride and ego hinder all 5 of the United Front for Peace in Prisons points of unity, and keep a lot of prisoners from reaching out to others to build these independent institutions. It's imperative that we tear these individualistic walls down and build upwards on community consciousness. We need examples of what these independent programs look like and how to build them.

The book *Prisoners of Liberation* by Allyn and Adele Rickett that MIM(Prisons) refers to in its response to "Fighting the System from Within" in *ULK 68* sounds like a good place to find this example. The writer makes a good point in eir letter that if our people would come to work in these prisons that they could expose the deficiencies and ill treatment.

Sisters from the belly of the dying beast. Our next move is in the separation of this failing nation and watch the fireworks. Amerikkka is in a desperate need for a healer, or a savior which will only come from US. Who are the Fathers and Mothers of civilization, Supreme beings.

FREE DR. MUTULU SHAKUR!!

MIM(Prisons) responds: We also foresee challenging times for the United States empire coming out of the coronavirus crisis. This creates opportunities for real change, and real change of the economic system will come when oppressed nations begin delinking from the imperialist system as this comrade says.

We must caution against taking our critique of the imperialists too far into pseudo-science. There are many promoting "all natural" cures to coronavirus to make a quick buck these days. It's not just the U.S. President pedaling dangerous unproven solutions. Certainly, if soldiers like Mutulu Shakur were not targeted by the state, New Afrikans and the world would be better off. And by seeing through Shakur's vision of a socialist future, we will be much better prepared to handle pandemics in the future, by putting the people before profits. ■

Which reminded me of a question a comrade asked me a while back pertaining to the "lack of security" I referred to above. The question was: why did I think that this place has such a high turnover rate? C.O.s get \$17 an hour and Sergeants get \$20 but they can't keep them working here. It's not like they work them especially hard. Myself, wanting to hold out hope in humanity answered that maybe once they started seeing this shit for what it really is, decide that they don't want to be an active participant in the oppression of their community. Maybe I put too much faith in their moral standards? Even if my answer was right they are still actively participating by not exposing the things done in here. I also like how the writer put it that the "moral obligation is ours," not just to end oppression, but to build a new system in its place. We the prisoners must champion our own rehabilitation and re-education, independent of our oppressors' programs, no longer allowing them to determine our value and self/community worth.

MIM(Prisons) responds: This writer picks up on the theme from *ULK 69* where we discuss building independent institutions. As this comrade points out, we can't count on the criminal injustice system to provide us

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ATTENTION SUBSCRIBERS:

We are still here, supporting prisoner organizing and education. But we do not know when the next ULK will be produced. And we are not sure when we will be sending newsletters out by subscription. For now, participate in our other projects, and keep writing in to get the most recent issue of ULK.

Write to: **MIM(Prisons)**
PO Box 40799
San Francisco, CA 94140

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PLEASE GOVERN YOURSELF
 ACCORDINGLY.

Educating in PA

by a Pennsylvania prisoner
 September 2019

Until recently I was being held at SCI Somerset with 9 months hole time. During this time prison officials stole my commissary, denied me access to the law library (mini law library), discarded my legal materials, discarded my incoming mail, denied me legal phone calls (even when I had court within days of my request), and I was denied meals (trays), among other things. All in retaliation for my filing grievances about the many injustices and inhumane living conditions I and others suffered from.

After successfully challenging those things via grievance appeals to central office, these C.O.s started targeting other prisoners. Denying them showers, yard, meals, and giving their incoming mail to other prisoners. These guys reacted, as they should, but the way they reacted was counterproductive. So I taught them how to fight our oppressors using the grievance procedure for positive results and they were successful.

As a result of this, the prison guards and prison officials conspired on a course of action and the result was they transferred me to a facility where they know I have multiple enemies, and labeled me as a gang member (which I'm not). This is a Restricted Housing Unit (RHU).

Throughout this entire ordeal I saw opportunity to start teaching those brothers

how to put a stop to oppression and injustices they were subjected to before I arrived. I am proud to say we've made a couple victories; small ones, but victories nonetheless. The brothers are especially happy of the bigger trays in the RHU! We have more work to do, our battles continue. ■

... Continued from previous page ...**UFPP**

with effective programs for rehabilitation or release. And so we need to build these programs ourselves. One such independent program is this newsletter, in which we are free to expose the news and conditions that the bourgeois press refused to cover. An independent newsletter is critical to our education and organizing work.

Another example of independent institutions is MIM(Prisons)'s Re-Lease on Life program to help releasees stay politically active and avoid the trap of recidivism. This program isn't yet big enough and is greatly lacking in resources, so right now we're not very effective. But we have to start somewhere. And we work to connect with comrades like this writer to build this program on the inside and on the streets.

In the short term, anyone looking to build small independent institutions behind bars can start a study group. This is a good way to start educating others while also learning yourself. And you can build from there with anyone willing to sit down and study. We can support this work with study questions and literature, just let us know you're interested! ■

From Sun Rise

by a California prisoner

*From sun rise
 Til night falls
 We remember those who fell
 In our stance of solidarity*

*Conditions created
 Thus the problem created
 "So called" crimes are committed
 Thus the reaction is manifest
 More prisons are built
 Thus the solution arises
 To oppress*

*From sun rise
 Til night falls
 We remember those who fell
 In our stance of solidarity*

*The K-9 / Pork Rinds / Pig Robots
 Inherit their racist oppressive
 Views and beliefs from
 Generations prior
 Telling me to "do the right thing"
 You're preaching to the choir*

*Justice for the martyrs
 Plus ignite the revolution
 Forward*

*From sun rise
 Til night falls
 We remember those who fell
 In our stance of solidarity ■*