



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for April 20th

5 Apr - "I need to be around bees"

We have a new poem from Eric King and are, as always, excited to share it.

MORE:

I need to be around bees
catching shade underneath tall trees.
I need to feel their fuzzy feet
walking all over my hands and knees
I need to melt in the Sun
feel it's rays all day or even just once
I need to make spider friends
listen real close as it's web spins
I need some woods to get lost in
have thorns and beetles all over my skin
I need a fresh inhale of life
to bask in the full moon's light
I need some roadside poke or some fresh cantaloupe
I need to just be let be,
nothing is good that isn't wild and Free

7 Apr - NYC: Get on the Bus to Philly for Mumia!

Buses, vans, and other transportation are available from New York City to Philadelphia on April 24th meeting at 10 AM at the north end of Union Square (17th and Park) and departing shortly thereafter.

MORE:

Due to COVID restrictions, seating will be less than half normal capacity and therefore advanced reservations are required. Please call the Free Mumia hotline at 212.330.8029 or email bus@freemumia.com to arrange a reservation.

Since this will be more expensive than usual, we are asking people who can afford it to pay \$50 for the roundtrip. However, anyone who wants to go with us will be able to, so we are also asking for donations at freemumia.com/donate so we can provide scholarship rides for everyone who needs one in order to participate. Any donation will help!

April 7th - 'His only treatment is freedom' Advocates for Mumia continue fight for his release

by Michael Z. Muhammad

Advocates on behalf of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal are not slowing down their efforts in working toward his release.

Social activist and writer Betsy Piette told me this slow walking of Mumia's appeals process could have only one end result—his death. For that reason, the focus for the movement to free the former Black Panther and journalist is calling for his compassionate release on medical grounds.

According to *The Jamal Journal*, an online publication, Mumia is suffering from Covid-19, congestive heart failure, liver cirrhosis, and a severe worsening of his chronic debilitating skin condition. His personal physician Dr. Ricardo Alvarez states, his only treatment is freedom.

Mumia, 66, is battling health problems while incarcerated at Mahanoy State Correctional Institution in Pennsylvania. He has served 40 years after being convicted of killing police officer Daniel Faulkner in 1981. He was sentenced to death in 1982. His death sentence was overturned, and a life sentence was imposed in 2011. He and his supporters have maintained he is innocent.

Philadelphia journalist Linn Washington, during an interview with me, pointed out a window of opportunity was opened for Mumia's release in December 2018 when Judge Leon Tucker granted him the right to file a new appeal of all the evidence of judicial, prosecutorial, and police misconduct that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court had previously rejected from 1998-2012.

Following Judge Tucker's landmark ruling on some evidence that advocates argued show Mumia's innocence and entitlement to a new trial—which had been hidden away in a district attorney storeroom—more roadblocks were revealed.

On February 3 of this year Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, touted by many people as a "progressive" again blocked this pathway from the ruling about a new appeal to the Pennsylvania Superior Court. D.A. Krasner, in his brief, denied that the newly disclosed evidence of state misconduct from the six hidden boxes of Mumia's prosecution files found two years ago are "material" and grounds for a new trial.

He argued the evidence against Mumia at trial was so overwhelming that it wouldn't have made a difference to the jury that convicted him of first-degree murder and sentenced him to death.

"There's institutional inertia against Mumia, and it goes from the police department through the district attorney up through the court system in Pennsylvania," Mr. Washington said. "I also think that Krasner has been getting some bad advice, and he's made a political calculus that he doesn't want to grant the relief that Mumia is entitled to. So, in this instance, the status quo is more important than fulfilling his persona as a reformer, as well as being consistent with supposedly the lawyer's commitment to justice."

According to Rachel Wolkenstein, a former attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, D.A. Krasner's response to Mumia's appeal is an undeniable legal blow and has most likely blocked the judicial path to Mumia's freedom. "To any who held out hope that Krasner would 'do the right thing,' Krasner had never given any indication that he questioned Mumia's conviction, even when—after protest and pressure—he agreed not to oppose the appeal process," she said.

"As District Attorney, Krasner had the legal authority and responsibility to review Mumia's case and, as constitutionally warranted, to support overturning Mumia's conviction because of due process violations and state misconduct," she added.

In court filings, Maureen Faulkner, wife of officer Faulkner, asked the Supreme Court to invoke its King's Bench powers to disqualify D.A. Krasner's office in the ongoing appeals and direct the state Attorney General's Office to handle them. She has contended that Krasner's office has conflicts of interest in defending against Mumia's appeals. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court dismissed her petition in December 2020. This action delayed Mumia's appeal for nearly a year.

She submitted a new request on March 17 with the Pennsylvania Superior Court to intervene, again seeking Krasner's removal and asking the court to "quash this appeal as untimely" and "for lack of jurisdiction."

"This is part of a decades-long effort of the FOP (Fraternal Order of Police) through Maureen Faulkner to block any relief from Mumia," observed Mr. Washington.

Ms. Piette states, with Ms. Faulker's reemergence, it's hard to determine a time frame when the appeals process will move forward. "It's the politics of it, and there's never been justice for Mumia. Pretty much except (Judge) Tucker in 2018. And the one ruling that went in his favor to remove the death sentence and that took 11 years to get resolved," she added

"That's what their end game is. The state's end game is to try to delay this case to the point that he'll die in prison from medical neglect. The whole movement here is making the demand that the only solution is release. They're not capable of giving him a fair trial, and they're not capable of providing him adequate healthcare," Ms. Piette surmised.

Pam Africa, coordinator for the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu Jamal, told me during an interview that she believes his health conditions are the direct result of his unjust imprisonment and inadequate medical care incarcerated brothers and sisters receive.

"Mumia is innocent," she said. "With all of this new information and delays, there is no way anybody can think that Mumia can have a fair trial," she said. "The call must be to release Mumia! Release Mumia now!" she added.

"For people who think that you should accept the lesser evil, this is why we are in the condition we are in right now. That's why the prisons are full of innocent people who are victims of the system. Martin Luther King said silence is a betrayal."

Plans are underway, said Ms. Africa, to celebrate Mumia's birthday during the weekend of April 24 with virtual meetings. "We plan a whole weekend of educating people and urging people to stay committed. We are also encouraging people to read The Jamal Journal published online for up-to-date information put out by Mumia and me."

April 14th - Urgent Call To Action: Mumia Abu-Jamal To Have Heart Surgery

We have learned that Mumia Abu-Jamal, the world renowned veteran Black Panther, political prisoner and radio journalist, had heart pain over the weekend. He was rushed to the hospital, and is expected to undergo heart surgery tomorrow, April 15, 2021.

We demand that:

- Before surgery, Mumia be allowed to call his wife, Wadiya Jamal; his longtime supporter Pam Africa; his chosen doctor, Dr. Ricardo Alvarez; and his Spiritual Advisor, Mark Taylor.
- Mumia not be shackled to his hospital bed, as is the rule in PA and across the United States.
- Mumia's immediate release of this innocent man from prison.

We need not look far to see the mortal danger that the shackling of a patient represents: our dear Ancestor, political prisoner Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald was chained and shackled to his hospital bed in his last days — while he was hardly conscious— and before making his final transition, just over 2 weeks ago on March 28, after 52 years in prison.

According to Dr. Ricardo Alvarez, Mumia's chosen doctor, "Any evidence of shackling will be seen as a deliberate harm to Mumia and a perpetuation of the court documented trauma he has already suffered." Loud and clear are the echoes of slavery, which —as Eric Williams shows in *Capitalism and Slavery* — for the first time in human history produced the global distribution and mass use of handcuffs, shackles and fetters to bring enslaved Africans to heel.

Dr. Alvarez continues, "There is significant evidence, both legal and medical, that Mumia has suffered severe harm because medical, legal, law enforcement, and judicial professionals have not met proper standards. Mumia has been recently hospitalized for COVID and Congestive Heart Failure and he already suffers from hypertension as well as liver cirrhosis and diabetes, both induced by court documented medical neglect. Freedom is the only treatment.

7 Apr - NYPD "Goon Squad" Manual Teaches Officers to Violate Protesters' Rights

Internal NYPD documents shed new light on the Strategic Response Group, or SRG, the heavily militarized police unit behind the crackdown on George Floyd protesters.

MORE:

by John Bolger and Alice Speri (*The Intercept*)

When thousands of New Yorkers poured into the city's streets last summer following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, they were met with the very police violence they had come to protest.

In the days following Floyd's death, and then again during protests last fall, New York police arrested hundreds of people, many with no probable cause. They pepper-sprayed protesters and struck them with batons, trapped them in the streets with no way out, pushed them to the ground, and shoved them with bikes. In Brooklyn, on May 30, an officer pulled down a man's Covid-19 mask and pepper-sprayed him at close range, bragging about it to fellow officers but failing to provide the man with medical assistance, as required by police regulations. Days later, another officer in Brooklyn struck a protester in the back of his head while he was complying with orders to disperse, causing a gash that required 10 staples. And in the Bronx, on June 4, police in riot gear corralled hundreds of people before an 8 p.m. curfew, then beat and arrested them under the watch of the department's highest-ranking uniformed officer, Chief of Department Terence Monahan.

Over multiple incidents, police regularly and unjustifiably used force against peaceful protesters, with state investigators finding that they beat people with blunt instruments at least 50 times, unlawfully pepper-sprayed them in at least 30 instances, and pushed or struck protesters at least 75 times. Officers targeted and retaliated against people engaging in constitutionally protected activity, New York Attorney General Letitia James's office concluded, and "blatantly violated the rights of New Yorkers."

Leading the violent crackdown was the New York Police Department's Strategic Response Group, or SRG, a heavily militarized, rapid-response unit of several hundred officers. Since its founding in 2015 to deal with public disorder events and terrorist acts, civil rights advocates have objected to the deployment of the unit to protests, and then-NYPD chief of department and later Commissioner James O'Neill pledged at the time that the SRG would "not be involved in handling protests and demonstrations."

The pledge turned out to be hollow. That same year, the SRG was deployed against Black Lives Matter protesters. Since then, the unit's armor-clad officers and bike squads have become a regular presence at protests, where they stand out for their confrontational and aggressive tactics. After each confrontation, complaints about the unit streamed into the Civilian Complaint Review Board, the independent body tasked with reviewing allegations of police abuse. Investigators found a disproportionate number of SRG officers accused of wrongdoing to have exceeded their legal authority, when compared with the wider department. The group earned a reputation among activists as the NYPD's "goon squad."

Inside the SRG

Despite its visibility, little is publicly known about the SRG and how its specialized officers are trained to respond to protests. Even the frequently cited number of 700 SRG officers is an estimate; the NYPD will not confirm the unit's headcount.

Now a series of internal documents obtained by *The Intercept* shed new light on the police unit behind some of the most brutal repression of protests in the wake of George Floyd's killing. *The Intercept* is publishing three of the public records with this story, including the SRG's guidelines and manuals for its field force operations and bike squads.

The documents offer a comprehensive overview of how the SRG operates. They outline the unit's responsibilities during routine assignments to precincts across the city, to which its officers are dispatched in response to spikes in crime and during special mobilizations, including to protests. The documents provide instructions regarding "mass arrest" procedures, guidelines for officers equipped with Colt M4 rifles, and directions for plainclothes, "counter-surveillance" officers tasked with shadowing tactical teams in the field.

Marked as “law enforcement sensitive” and bearing destruction notices, the documents also detail a variety of formations and maneuvers for bike squads and teams of officers on foot and in vehicles. Some of the maneuvers described in detail are variations of what the NYPD refers to as “encirclement,” the police’s name for what demonstrators call “kettling,” a technique civil rights advocates have long denounced as leading to police abuses.

Over the last months, a series of scathing reports by independent agencies condemned the NYPD’s response to the protests. The reports, which underscored the department’s lack of preparedness and officers’ poor training, contributed to a narrative that has become frequent in the wake of police abuses: that officers would have better handled such situations with better training — and thus more resources.

That narrative is complicated by the internal documents reviewed by *The Intercept*. Many of the policies laid out in the documents were not followed last summer or during more recent police crackdowns on protests. But the documents also raise questions about the content of police training on protest response itself. While paying lip service to protesters’ constitutional rights, the documents do little to explain how those rights should be protected, offering instead pages of instructions on how to circumvent them.

A spokesperson for the NYPD defended the SRG’s training, which he said includes a specialized SRG Academy as well as an annual, two-day course and eight monthly, two-hour unannounced drills. Members of the SRG Bicycle Squad participate in an annual two-day refresher course, he added. In August 2020 the department expanded training on the policing of protest to all members of the service.

“The NYPD protects the Constitutional right to peaceful protest, and works to ensure public safety for any New Yorker exercising their First Amendment rights,” the spokesperson, Sergeant Edward D. Riley, wrote in a statement to *The Intercept*. “Many different units of the NYPD respond to major events — including protests — to ensure the safety of the public at these events.”

The NYPD documents include several drawings of tactical maneuvers as well as photos taken during police training and real-life protests, including some featuring prominent activists like Linda Sarsour, Tamika Mallory, and Jose LaSalle. Overall, the SRG materials reflect a heavy-handed approach to the policing of protest and echo the war-on-terror mentality on which the unit was premised, at one point referring to protesters as potential “hostile targets.”

Joo-Hyun Kang, director of Communities United for Police Reform, a coalition of community organizations, argued that the problem with the NYPD’s response to the protests was not so much a matter of preparedness as of culture.

“Training is the easiest thing for elected officials to call for every time there is a controversy around police violence,” she said. “That has historically never worked to actually decrease police violence, or increase the firings of officers who violate people, or increase accountability.”

The NYPD documents, which detail a clear chain of command in protest situations, also underscore how top department leadership, rather than rogue cops, bears responsibility for police actions during the protests, including the decisions to “kettle” people and resort to mass arrests. The Civilian Complaint Review Board received more than 300 allegations of police abuse in connection to the protests, and dozens of New Yorkers offered hours of harrowing public testimony about police brutality.

The incidents are now at the heart of a series of federal lawsuits against the city, including one by the New York attorney general. Nearly 450 people have also indicated their plans to sue the city individually over their treatment at the hands of police, suits that are expected to cost taxpayers millions in settlements.

The lawsuits zero in on abuses by SRG officers. In one, attorneys seeking to represent hundreds of protesters accuse the city of “deploying one particularly problematic, inadequately trained, poorly supervised and disciplined group of NYPD members: the NYPD’s Strategic Response Group.”

“SRG officers are not only inadequately trained to respond to peaceful protests,” the attorney general’s office echoed in its own complaint, “but their training in terrorism response, which necessarily requires aggressive tactics and extreme force, is almost certain to result in constitutional violations when applied to peaceful protesters.”

Critics of systemic police abuses noted that in seeking reforms to police’s protest responses, the lawsuits risk the pitfalls of previous, similar efforts that followed high-profile crackdowns on dissent and led to little substantial change.

“There’s no justice in it, there’s no real improvement,” said Alex Vitale, a sociology professor and the author of “The End of Policing,” who was involved in some of those earlier efforts. “It’s really hard to say that things really got any better as a result of that. They just work around it, or they just ignore it.”

The “Goon Squad”

The SRG was conceived by Mayor Bill de Blasio’s first NYPD commissioner, Bill Bratton, as an elite unit to deal with both “counterterrorism” and civil disorder. Originally approved in 2015 as a 350-officer unit, the SRG included teams in each borough and incorporated the Disorder Control Unit, or DCU, which had been central to aggressive crackdowns on mass protests in the past. The DCU had been instrumental in policing large events like Occupy Wall Street and protests surrounding the 2004 Republican National Convention, which resulted in massive numbers of arrests and alleged abuses. The crackdown on the 2004 protests led to record legal settlements—observers say could be surpassed by suits surrounding last summer’s uprising.

Within a year of its founding, a controversial push to expand the NYPD’s head count by 1,300 officers ended up doubling the size of the SRG. Its budget quickly ballooned from \$13 million to nearly \$90 million. Equipped with state-of-the-art anti-riot gear and heavy weaponry, as well as its signature fleet of bicycles and combat armor-clad riders, the SRG, a voluntary unit, attracted cops looking for “more action,” many with lengthy misconduct records. Since 2015, SRG officers have met peaceful protests with violence, failed to intervene as far-right activists assaulted counterprotesters, and participated in the fatal shooting of an unarmed man.

Despite initial reassurances to the contrary, the SRG ended up policing protests far more than it did any “counterterrorism” work — already the job of the NYPD’s Counterterrorism Bureau — but it brought its militarized mentality and tactics to the policing of civil unrest. The SRG engaged in what the unit’s guidelines refer to as “high visibility static deployment,” a show of force intended to “provide and enhance visibility at sensitive or other locations.” The unit dispatched officers donning military-style gas masks, ready for the “hazards of a weapons of mass destruction event” thanks to training in Chemical Ordinance, Biological and Radiological Awareness, or COBRA.

Organizers like Kang, of Communities United for Police Reform, opposed the formation of the SRG in its early days, not least because of the group’s conflation of protest with terrorism. That the SRG was quickly deployed to protests, despite assurances that it would not be, was to Kang emblematic of “the NYPD being able to unilaterally do whatever it wants, at any time that it wants.” Kang noted that the department faced no pushback from the administration over its broken promise and added that the City Council did not hold a hearing about the SRG until a public uproar over its role in the arrest of immigrant rights activist Ravi Ragbir by federal immigration agents in 2018.

Ultimately, Kang said, the SRG’s abuses reflected broader issues with the NYPD as a whole.

“The SRG is a symbol of the hyper-aggressive, militarized, unaccountable police violence in New York City, but that’s not exclusive to the SRG,” she said. “We have to understand this is part of the fabric of how the NYPD has historically treated protests and has historically treated Black, Latinx, and other communities of color.”

Policing Protests

According to the NYPD documents, one of the SRG’s core missions is to “respond to citywide mobilizations, civil disorders and major events with highly trained personnel and specialized equipment to maintain public order.” The documents lay out procedures for dealing with emergencies, to which the SRG can respond by answering calls over citywide radio.

Unlike with emergency calls, the SRG often has advance notice and time to prepare for protests. As soon as a detail is approved, an SRG field intelligence officer begins compiling a package of information on the situation for distribution to the SRG executive staff and commanding officer. According to the SRG documents, the intelligence packets include information such as the group size, planned arrests, key members of the protest group, and the group’s hierarchy. Based on the intelligence, SRG executives make tactical decisions and supervisors debrief officers on the response plan, including the “past history of this event or others involving this location or organization.” Other SRG documents repeatedly refer to the unit’s reliance on intelligence and the monitoring of social media.

When the SRG arrives at a protest, it plays a supporting role in the NYPD ecosystem. SRG officers report to the local commander in charge, who has the authority to order arrests. Before such an order, according to the documents, SRG officers are instructed to follow directions and not to exercise discretion. They may make arrests unilaterally if they witness any felony or serious misdemeanor, such as vandalism, reckless endangerment, possession of a weapon, or assault. But the decision to engage in mass arrests of protesters for nonviolent behavior like unlawful assembly or “obstructing governmental administration,” the most frequent protest-related charges, rests squarely with department leadership.

As the NYPD’s premier riot breakers, SRG units come heavily equipped, ready to make a show of overwhelming force against demonstrators. When a show of force fails, the SRG has a catalog of formations designed to break up protests. According to the SRG documents, these range from the basics, such as the “Wedge Formation,” used to split a crowd in half, to the more advanced, such as the “Separation Formation,” used to get between two dueling factions of protesters and push them apart.

One of the maneuvers best known to protesters is the “Encirclement Formation,” which is used “when there is a need to take a group of people into custody,” according to the guidelines. Commonly known as “kettling,” the formation allows police to surround protesters, leaving them no means of escape. Encirclement formations can be as small as one squad of eight officers or as large as an entire platoon of four squads. In either case, the move to encircle protesters indicates that the decision to arrest has already been made, the document notes, and that the targets have been chosen.

On paper, the SRG’s formations may seem well organized, but in practice, their execution is violent and chaotic. At a September demonstration in Times Square, SRG officers encircled a group of people protesting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, including several on bikes, before they had even started moving, a protester who took several videos of police that day told *The Intercept*.

“The moment the bikes lined up on the street, the NYPD just immediately rushed over, started grabbing people by their hair, like five or six officers per person, throwing people to the ground, arresting all the bicyclists,” he said. “The protest hadn’t even really started yet.”

The Bike Squad

The SRG takes considerable pride in its bike fleet and deploys it frequently to protests. Rather than tamping down disorder, the SRG's interventions have sowed chaos amid largely peaceful demonstrations.

The training material repeats department lore about the founding of New York's very first "Scorcher Squad" fleet of bicycle cops by Theodore Roosevelt when he was police commissioner in 1895. Today's SRG bike squad is modeled after the Seattle Police Department, and some of the early SRG bicyclists received training in Washington.

The bike squad's high maneuverability is perhaps the SRG's most important tactical innovation and the only function of the SRG that is not redundant with previously existing NYPD units. The bike squad has the capability to speed ahead of protest marches, and the SRG documents instruct bike officers to report real-time protest intelligence back to command, such as overheard plans, identities of "aggressors" and "ringleaders," presence of improvised weapons, and injuries. The bike units can also move ahead to flank protests, selectively blocking streets to dictate the path of an oncoming march.

NYPD training documents say that in close quarters, the bicycle represents a "force multiplier": One cop on a bicycle can take the place of three officers with batons. In addition to bike versions of on-foot formations, the bike squad has its own moves, such as the "power slide" and the "dynamic dismount," which consist of an officer lunging from a moving bicycle without breaking speed, taking down a suspect by surprise.

"Get bicycle up to a controlled rate of speed and aim for target. While in attack position, swing right leg over the rear of bicycle," an SRG bike squad training module states, "After step through, place right foot on ground and dismount bicycle ... make contact with subject and proceed with arrest or rescue."

One of the unit's highly visible tactics, the "Mobile Fence Line," used to "gain ground and compliance," employs SRG officers standing with their bikes across their chests, forming a line tire to tire. Shouting "MOVE BACK!," the bicycle fence will advance aggressively over short distances. When a mobile fence line rakes across a protest area, it is because the police intend to make arrests, according to the SRG documents. One way this happens is with a maneuver called a BLAM.

In the "Bike Line Arrest Maneuver," officers are instructed by the SRG documents to shout "BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!" as they advance. The documents outline the procedure for scooping people, right down to the "clinch" hold used to restrain them in emergency situations. "Clinch maneuver is control of subjects head by clinching your hands and arms behind the head of subject and bringing head against your chest," the BLAM training module states, adding: "DO NOT CHOKE HOLD, DO NOT BLOCK AIRWAY."

During the June 4 incident in the Bronx, SRG officers used bicycles as weapons in what Human Rights Watch later described as a "planned assault" on protesters. In public testimony to the attorney general's office, demonstrators described what happened when the SRG bike squad's mobile fence line advanced: "The officer right in front of me gave a command, and they raised their bikes and rammed into me and all protesters in the front," testified Sami Disu, an adjunct professor at John Jay College, adding that he was also pepper-sprayed during the incident.

Others described being squeezed by the advance. Another protester arrested that night, Christina Ellsberg, described how the SRG trapped a group of protesters: "They tightened their ranks and forced us together using their bikes and swinging batons until we were crushed and trampling each other," Ellsberg said in the testimony. "At that point, panic set in. People were screaming, others struggling to breathe."

Push for Accountability

As the SRG's aggressive tactics against demonstrators came into stark display last summer, top city officials stood by the police. De Blasio repeatedly defended officers' conduct, and NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea said, hours after police kettled and arrested dozens of protesters in the Bronx incident, that the action had been "a plan which was executed nearly flawlessly."

Virtually everyone else condemned the police's handling of the protests, with civil rights groups like the New York Civil Liberties Union and the public defenders of the Legal Aid Society denouncing police's "indiscriminate brutalizing of peaceful protestors" throughout the demonstrations.

In their joint lawsuit, NYCLU and Legal Aid are seeking damages for a dozen people who were beaten, pepper-sprayed, shoved to the ground, and arrested during several incidents last summer. The lawyers also want the police to declare that police violated the First and Fourth amendments.

In another class-action lawsuit, attorneys are seeking damages on behalf of a potentially enormous group of plaintiffs, including "all people arrested between May 28 and June 6, as well as all people who have been or will be subjected to the NYPD's practices of violently disrupting protests."

And in its own lawsuit, the New York State Office of the Attorney General has called on the courts to install an independent federal monitor to oversee the NYPD's policing tactics at future protests as well as a declaration that the tactics deployed last summer were unlawful. (A federal judge has temporarily combined these lawsuits.)

As his record on policing came under scrutiny during the protests more than at any time in his troubled tenure, de Blasio, in his last year in office, once again pledged reforms. "I'm reflecting on what happened in May and June, and I look back with remorse," the mayor said last December.

He and Shea pledged to accept the recommendations of the city's Department of Investigation, which called for the NYPD to create a new protest response unit that does not report to the SRG and to "reevaluate the central role of the Strategic Response Group and Disorder Control Unit in response to large protests given their orientation to handle counterterrorism, riots, and other serious threats, and better calibrate their use to circumstances that require such specialized force."

Others, like New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer, have gone further. In a set of recommendations, Stringer, who is running for mayor, called for tactical police teams and heavily armed officers to be removed from protests altogether, replaced by a mostly civilian force tasked with managing the movement of people during demonstrations. "The SRG Disorder Control Unit should be disbanded," Stringer wrote.

Yet disbanding the SRG won't do much if its role and tactics end up repurposed under a new unit, critics warn, citing the SRG's roots in the DCU and the NYPD's long history of shutting down controversial units only to resurface them with rebranded names. Because the department operates with virtually no transparency, the public and even elected officials sometimes don't learn of internal changes or the shuffling of units and officers until months after these changes happened, said Kang.

"The SRG should be disbanded, yes," she added. "But that in itself won't solve all the problems of what the SRG actually symbolizes: the hyper-militarization, the hyper-aggressive policing tactics. That's not an SRG problem only, that's an NYPD problem."

9 Apr - Kings Bay Plowshares 7 Updates and Writings

Not to bury the lede—Mark Colville was sentenced to 21 months and Steve Kelley was ordered released after being sentenced to time served. All that and more below.

MORE:

More than three years after he and six other anti-nuclear activists entered Kings Bay Naval Base, home to six Trident nuclear submarines, a federal judge sentenced Mark Colville to 21 months in prison.

Over a video conference, Judge Lisa Godbey Wood sentenced Mark to the minimum of the recommended guidelines provided by prosecutors. Mark is the last of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 to be sentenced. Five

are now in prison. Prior to the trial Mark had already served about 15 months of his sentence, which will count towards his 21 months.

Mark told the court that its refusal to recognize the right of his family and community “to live without a nuclear gun on hair trigger alert held perpetually to our heads...(has) placed it in a posture of criminality.”

During our Festival of Hope earlier in the week, Mark announced that he had withdrawn six of his seven motions to the court arguing for vacating his sentence. He told supporters then that he saw no use in allowing the judge to act as if she seriously considered them.

“This government, in its lawlessness, has hidden first strike weapons with enough firepower to kill six billion people,” he read from his sentencing statement today. The court has a responsibility to “to allow the law to be applied beyond the fence at Kings Bay...a fence that I and my loved ones, with much fear and trembling, freely answered the call of faith, of conscience, and the call of generations yet unborn, to breach.

“In a very real sense, then, this hearing today is itself irrelevant. The court has already pronounced a sentence on me, on my family, and on my neighborhood. We are condemned to live as members of a rogue state, which, in the face of a global consensus that outlaws nuclear weapons, budgeted what amounts to \$100,000 a minute over the next decade to upgrade its stockpile of these useless, poisonous idols.”

As with all six of his co-defendants, Mark was also ordered to share payment of restitution of \$33,503.51. He was also sentenced to three years of supervised probation.

Mark called on teacher and activist Stephen Kobasa as his sole character witness.

“Mark Colville doesn’t need me here,” Stephen said. “His consistency, his passion, his fierce commitment to hope are completely apparent to anyone who has encountered him.

“There is nothing in the world of more seriousness than what Mark and his companions in the Kings Bay Plowshares demand that we face. The weapons at Kings Bay condemn us to living each and every moment in fear of losing everything we believe matters, everything we have, in a single flash of unbearable light.

“At this very moment there are a number of courtrooms in this country where cases of the most overwhelming importance are being decided. But even George Floyd’s murder in all its horror cannot compare to the truth... about nuclear weapons.

“For, you see, if Mark is right – and he is – then most of the rest of us have failed to tell the truth, even to ourselves about nuclear weapons, because if we did we would have no choice but to do what he and his companions did, and be standing alongside him here.”

Mark was given 60 days to report to prison.

April 9th - Mark Colville’s Statement at Sentencing

I am speaking to you from land that was taken from the Momauguins, members of the Quinnipiac Indian Tribe, here in what is now called the Hill Neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut. So to begin, I wish to acknowledge them, and bow to the spirits of a people who treated this territory with reverence, as the sacred space that it is.

What I have to say today is simple, and it echoes the message I have borne from the first time I walked into your courtroom three years ago. My neighborhood, my family and I have a right to live without a nuclear gun on hair trigger alert held perpetually to our heads. That right is ours, both by birth and by law. It is neither granted by courts, nor denied by them, but this court’s refusal to defend that right- or even to recognize it- has now, with no fewer than 28 convictions against me and my companions, placed it firmly in a posture of criminality. On this the world agrees, as the international consensus prohibiting the building

and possession of nuclear weapons became law, by ratified treaty, on January 21st of this year. I bow then, also, to the vast multitude of neighborhoods worldwide-beginning with Hiroshima and Nagasaki-whose people have been demanding to be free of this scourge for more than 75 years, and who now await our nation's compliance.

This court was given a responsibility to all of those people, to all of those neighborhoods, and to me. It was a charge that the times demanded and still demand; an obligation that emanates directly from the conscience of the human community, and which the court ultimately refused to accept. That responsibility was simply to allow the law to be applied beyond the fence at Kings Bay; that fence behind which this government, in its lawlessness, has hidden first strike weapons with enough firepower to kill 6 billion people; a fence that I and my loved ones, with much fear and trembling, freely answered the call of faith, the call of conscience, and the call of generations yet unborn, to breach.

I am no lawyer, but I have come to know enough about the law, about politics and about history, to say with confidence that there were two decisions already set in place before this court ever met me. The first was that the secrecy that remains both the lifeblood of this murderous enterprise called nuclearism, and the most lethal cancer for democracy- would not be disturbed. The second was that the legality of nuclear weapons was never to be questioned. These two decisions essentially preordained the prospect that we would be subjected to a political trial, with little possibility of a coherent defense, before a jury that would be laboring under an enforced ignorance. The choice of this court to abide by those decisions has rendered it complicit in the crimes for which it has granted impunity to this government.

No wonder then, that when our jury- chosen from the very neighborhoods surrounding King's Bay- asked this court if our testimony that nuclear weapons were being kept at the base was fact or speculation, the court refused to answer, asserting that the question was irrelevant. Indeed, maybe the greatest tragedy laid bare by these proceedings is that our federal courts have lost sight of one of the most basic concepts of justice, borne out time and time again in this nation's history: ultimately, in the formation and the deconstruction of law, it is the conscience of the human community that determines what is relevant, not the whims of a corporatized government or the dubious demands of a terrified national security state. If ever there was a moment in history when we needed to recover this understanding, that moment has come. Sitting here under judgement today, what I grieve most about this trial has nothing to do with a verdict or a sentence. It is this court's absurd logic, which effectively maintains that the only proper time to subject these omnicidal weapons to any kind legal scrutiny is after they've been launched.

In a very real sense, then, this hearing today is itself irrelevant. The court has already pronounced a sentence on me, on my family, and on my neighborhood. We are hereby condemned to live as members of a rogue state, which, in the face of a global consensus that outlaws nuclear weapons, has budgeted what amounts to \$100,000 per minute over the next ten years to upgrade its stockpile of these useless, poisonous idols. We are sentenced to bear quietly, obediently, the relentless human tragedy that this massive theft of resources wreaks on our community. We are ordered to disobey any faith or conscience-based command to substantively reject the false security that this standing threat to murder all of creation provides.

For my part, I declare to you today that we will not comply.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude the large number letters that you, Judge Wood, have received on my behalf. It is my sincere hope that you will consider them not as pleas for mercy, but expressions of the conscience of the community with regard to the words that Steven and I have spoken here today. And, in that same spirit, I would like to add this prayer from Pope Francis to the pile...

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
That we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this
earth, so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.
—Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí*

April 13th - Steve Kelly FREE after 3 years for nuclear abolition actions

by Dennis Apel (*The Nuclear Resister*)

On April 13, in a brief, COVID-hybrid hearing in federal court in Tacoma, Washington, Fr. Steve Kelly, S.J. was sentenced to time served for violating conditions of his supervised release for a 2017 trespass conviction at the Kitsap-Bangor Trident nuclear submarine base. As of today, he had served the maximum six-month prison sentence for the original charge, and he was unconditionally released from custody.

Fr. Kelly appeared in person with his attorney Blake Kremer in the courtroom of federal Magistrate Judge David Christel, with the U.S. attorney and probation officer joining via video link. Supporters were able to listen in by phone using a number provided by the court for the public.

By the time of Fr. Kelly's arrest in April, 2018 at the Navy's other Trident base at Kings Bay, Georgia (the Kings Bay Plowshares action), a bench warrant had already been issued for his arrest for violating the terms of his supervised release by not reporting to the federal probation office in Washington state. Entry onto another military installation and the federal charges were addressed at today's hearing.

The Jesuit priest remained in jail in Georgia from the time of his arrest through trial in October, 2019 and his sentencing in October, 2020 to 33 months in prison plus restitution and three years of supervised release. With credit for time served, he'd essentially completed the custodial sentence but remained in federal custody pending today's hearing. U.S. marshals took him from Georgia in mid-December to bring him to Washington state, a journey that took over 3-1/2 months with stays at three more private prisons and jails along the way in Florida, Oklahoma and Nevada.

Addressing the court before being sentenced, Fr. Kelly recounted the circumstances of his arrest and trial in 2017. He and six others had simply crossed the line during a peaceful protest at the Kitsap Bangor base. At their bench trial before Magistrate Judge Christel that September, they stipulated to all the facts, spoke their conscience, and were found guilty of trespass.

"We were sentenced to community service, fines and a year of supervised release," Fr. Kelly continued.

"And I told you at the time in open court, hoping that you would understand, that as a matter of conscience I could not participate in any of those. And you listened, and then you asked me, you put it back to me, you said 'What alternative is there?'"

“I think you did not mean it rhetorically, it was really, just, what more could you do? So I’m only saying this to remind [you]... as the seven of us were processed for that, you said ‘Are you going to participate in this, Fr. Kelly?’ and I said, ‘Please, please, I cannot do supervised release. I’m asking you to translate it into a period of incarceration.’

“There was no further comment after that... I’m not trying to get out from underneath the consequences ... but at least it wasn’t some kind of a trust that I was breaking. My conscience is clear.

“And this will be the last thing that I’ll be saying... This is the way to love everyone in this courtroom. This is the way to love our fellow human beings, is that I had to take a stand against the nuclear weapons.

“And of course what happened in Georgia... was a continuation of my acting in conscience. I think that it’s probably best said that while there are nuclear weapons out there, my conscience will probably be very consistent about this. I hope that helps. Thank you.”

Christel responded that he recalled the case and the conversation they’d had in the courtroom about his sentence, and why he had decided to impose probation at the time.

He told Fr. Kelly, “I thought throughout that matter that you and the other defendants were very principled, and very direct and honest. I always respected that and I still do.”

With that, Christel revoked Kelly’s probation, sentenced him to time served, and ordered his release with no supervision to follow in this case. Fr. Kelly was, however, reminded that the supervision imposed by the southern district of Georgia is still in effect, and that court has required him to report to the Georgia probation office within 72 hours of his release from prison.

Soon after, Fr. Kelly and his attorney walked out of the courthouse to join a circle of friends and supporters who had been praying, singing and holding signs and banners in front of the courthouse.

14 Apr - Drone wars whistleblower Daniel Hale enters one guilty plea

The week before his scheduled April 5 trial, Air Force veteran and former intelligence analyst Daniel Hale changed his plea to guilty on one count of violating the Espionage Act when he illegally obtained classified “national defense information” and give it to a reporter widely acknowledged to be Jeremy Scahill, co-founder of The Intercept.

MORE:

At a March 31 hearing in federal court in Virginia, Hale affirmed he had printed 36 documents on a government computer while working for a private contractor, 23 of them unrelated to his work, and provided “at least 17 to a reporter and/or the reporter’s news outlet, which published the documents...” Eleven were classified Secret or Top Secret.

The information Hale shared revealed gross human rights violations in the preparation of target lists for deadly attacks where ninety percent of the people killed were not the intended targets.

Jesselyn Radack, Hale’s attorney, told *CovertAction Magazine* that Hale changed his plea because he “would not have received a fair trial because the arcane Espionage Act does not allow for a public interest defense. Meaning, Hale’s motive of wanting to inform the public could not be raised as a defense to the charge of disclosure of information.”

Judge Liam O’Grady permitted Hale to remain free under supervision of a probation officer until sentencing on July 13. The charge carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison. Despite the guilty plea, federal prosecutors opposed a motion to dismiss four related charges.

Kevin Gosztola, reporting on the hearing at dissenter.substack.com, wrote that O’Grady “seemed to recognize the four remaining charges criminalize much of the conduct already covered in Hale’s plea. Often this is referred to as charge stacking. Yet the judge permitted the government’s extraordinary and unusual request, leaving open the possibility of a trial if prosecutors are unhappy with sentencing.” O’Grady also noted that the sentence he gives Hale would probably not depend on the number of convictions, and he would address the issue at sentencing.

Hale was arrested in May 2019, nearly six years after he first spoke out publicly against the U.S. drone warfare program at a CodePink Ground the Drones summit, and at least five years after the FBI was first aware that he was the likely source for classified disclosures at the heart of The Intercept’s 2015 Drone Papers series, and his appearance in the documentary film National Bird. In August 2014, two weeks after *The Intercept* first published an article based on his material and just days after he completed an assignment for the defense contractor Leidos with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency as a political geography analyst, FBI agents had searched his home and seized thumb drives containing at least one classified document, software used for anonymous internet browsing, and contact information for Scahill.

In the Drone Papers, Scahill quotes his source saying, “This outrageous explosion of watchlisting — of monitoring people and racking and stacking them on lists, assigning them numbers, assigning them ‘baseball cards,’ assigning them death sentences without notice, on a worldwide battlefield — it was, from the very first instance, wrong.”

The week after Hale changed his plea, nearly two dozen people held signs and banners declaring “Free Daniel Hale” and “Daniel Hale Exposed War Crimes” as they vigiled and blocked the gates of Creech Air Force base in Indian Springs, Nevada. Creech, commanded by Col. Stephen R. Jones, is the nation’s premier drone warfare training and covert operations base. Commuter traffic was disrupted while some demonstrators chanted “Arrest Col. Jones for War Crimes, Not Daniel Hale for Whistleblowing.”

“Blockaders held their blockade for as long as they could, without risking arrest, to avoid the higher health risks that exist with jail detainment during the COVID pandemic,” wrote Toby Blomé, an organizer of the twice-annual Shut Down Creech action camps in the desert northwest of Las Vegas.

SUPPORT ACTION

CodePink asks that supporters sign the petition to Judge O’Grady at codepink.org/danielhale. Supporters are also encouraged to write a letter to Judge O’Grady speaking to Daniel’s character and the public importance of his disclosures. Directions for writing your letter and getting it to his attorney, who will present it to the court, are found at codepink.org/danielhaleletters.

14 Apr - Facebooking While Brown

Loren Reed, a 26-year-old Diné (Navajo) man, is set for trial on May 4, 2021 for a trumped-up federal charge of “Threats to Damage and Destroy a Building by Means of Fire” after he engaged in a heated debate over Black Lives Matter protest tactics in a private Facebook chat group created to organize a local police brutality protest.

MORE:

Reed has been held in federal pretrial detention without bail for ten months after a prior high school acquaintance reported him to the police for a different satirical social media post about planning a protest or ‘riot’ at the courthouse that never actually happened. An undercover FBI agent then infiltrated the private chat group, and monitored numerous messages exchanged by Reed and his friends. After this intrusive monitoring of speech, and lacking any real evidence, Reed was quickly and violently arrested in his neighborhood on June, 2, 2020. Nothing incriminating was found during or after the arrest, despite officers thoroughly searching Reed’s home and even his housemates.

"This federal charge is unconstitutional because there was never a legally-justified 'true threat' contained in the posts that would remove the broad protections of the First Amendment that apply even to vitriolic or offensive speech," said CLDC Executive Director Lauren Regan, one of the attorneys assisting Loren Reed on the case. "The supposed "threat" was never communicated to any target or victim, there was no intent to act or any evidence of an intent to act, and there is no lawful basis to federally prosecute someone for speech only – much less an Indigenous organizer confronting racism in very conservative Arizona."

"Prosecuting someone in these circumstances takes us down the slippery slope of what is protected speech versus what is a 'true threat' justifying criminal prosecution. We must hold strong to the outer limits of the First Amendment or we all lose the right to freely speak our minds. Today the criminalized speech may pertain to BLM protests, but tomorrow it could be religion, science, or other political beliefs." Regan said.

Over the course of the next ten months, Reed was held without formal charge for a month in the Coconino County Jail, where he contracted COVID-19 and where his close friend had died the year before after being denied medical care. He was later transferred to a private for-profit federal detention center in Florence, Arizona, a polluted copper mining town turned prison industrial complex hub. Reed was not indicted with a crime until late September. His trial has now been delayed three times and is currently set for May 4, 2021.

The U.S. Attorney's office blames the pandemic for the following nine months of additional detention in which Reed was denied a speedy trial – or even bail – and in which it filed three separate motions to 'extend' his case. However, that has not stopped the government from attempting to bury this miscarriage of justice by informally suggesting an oppressive plea agreement that would result in a felony conviction, and likely probationary sentence.

"For an Indigenous person who faces the reality of institutional racism in his daily life, being threatened with a conviction for a crime he did not commit is a precarious, life-devastating burden," stated Klee Benally, a longtime Diné (Navajo) sacred lands advocate and organizer from Flagstaff, Arizona. "It is courageous of Loren to refuse to accept this atrocious deal. While it could free him from custody immediately, it would endanger organizers and activists in the future by further criminalizing speech. Loren is taking a powerful stand, and we need to stand right there with him."

Reed, a rapper who is known as a sensitive yet enthusiastic jokester, adamantly denies that there was any threat implied in his posts. Anyone reading them with an open mind would agree. And yet, the State wants to saddle a young Indigenous man with a felony conviction that will haunt him for the rest of his life.

"This is yet another attempt to control the speech and tone of a person of color amidst a year of heartbreaking – and increasingly fatal – racially-motivated police violence. Appallingly, in this situation the State has chosen to exploit a snitch's biased complaint to police in order to further perpetuate this cycle of violence," said Regan.

"We are calling on the federal prosecutor to immediately dismiss the charge in the interests of justice. Mr. Reed has already served over 10 months in pretrial detention for speech that did not actually threaten anyone," she added.

"As Indigenous justice advocates, we stand with Loren Reed. The criminalization of Loren — and his right to free speech — is an ongoing violation of Indigenous rights and overall justice," said Morning Star Gali of the Pit River Tribe, a lifelong Indigenous rights advocate with Restoring Justice for Indigenous Peoples who is currently based out of Sacramento, California.

"We also need to talk about the racism at play here," said CLDC Attorney Sarah Alvarez. "Already, the feds are declining to prosecute, electing to charge petty misdemeanors, and/or negotiating lenient plea deals for the white supremacists that assaulted the U.S. Capitol on January 6. They have also entirely turned a blind eye toward the hundreds of far-right individuals who threatened politicians and police via social

media. Meanwhile, an Indigenous man has been sitting in jail without due process for 10 months – all over a tongue-in-cheek social media post where no violence or property damage ever occurred nor was ever intended to occur. It’s difficult to prove this in court, but Mr. Reed’s case is a textbook example of race-based disparate treatment, and it needs to end with an immediate dismissal of the charge against him.”

Reed is scheduled for a jury trial starting May 4 but there’s still time for the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Department of Justice to do the right thing and immediately drop the charge to let him return to his life.

15 Apr - Covid is ravaging American jails and prisons – and inmates are rightly rising up

On 4 April, inmates in a St Louis jail commenced an uprising.

MORE:

by Akin Olla (*The Guardian*)

They smashed windows, chanted, lit fires and hung signs communicating their needs to the outside world. One sign held out of the windows simply read "HELP US". It is the second uprising at the ironically named St Louis City Justice Center and the fourth major disturbance at the jail within the last year.

Many of the inmates are in pre-trial detention and have been sitting in jail since the beginning of the pandemic without trials or even a timeline for when they should expect trials. Protesters called for court dates and for humane treatment, and a corrections taskforce report from March concluded that those locked inside were feeling isolated from their families and frustrated over the lack of precautions being taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19 within the jail. They are not alone; another uprising took place this time last year at a prison in Kansas, and protests have been relatively commonplace across the country as people have worked to expose the hidden hyper-pandemic happening within our nation's jails, prisons and immigrant detention centers. The United States needs to take this as an opportunity to empty out its criminally overcrowded jails, or continue to perpetuate yet another unforgivable mass atrocity that disproportionately affects immigrants, poor people and Black Americans.

While the pandemic has been particularly brutal in the United States in general, the situation has been much worse for those living in the world's largest system of incarceration. According to a recent *New York Times* report, 34 out of 100 people in prisons across the country have contracted the virus, more than triple the rate of the general US population. During the pandemic, an average of seven people locked behind bars have died of Covid-19 every day. One immigration detention center in Virginia saw a nearly 100% infection rate. The real overall numbers are most likely higher due to inconsistent and poor testing measures. Many inmates, like the 3,800 who were infected at the Fresno, California, county jail, have not yet been to trial.

This was the case for Preston Chaney, a 64-year-old Black man who died in a Texas jail because he couldn't afford \$100 bail. In effect, he died because he was too poor to be deemed worthy of survival during a pandemic. According to a report by the University of Texas, 80% of those who died in Texas county jails were in a similar position to Chaney and those who rose up in St Louis – trapped in a box awaiting trials that they may not live long enough to see. And there are also cases such as Bruce Norris, a 69-year-old Black man in Pennsylvania who was in the process of receiving parole after serving nearly 45 years in prison. He died of Covid before the governor could officially sign off on his release.

Protests demanding the release of people locked inside immigration centers, prisons and jails began almost as soon as the pandemic started. The protests helped define the earliest tactic of the pandemic era, the car caravan. And they have continued throughout the last year, both inside and outside jails like the solidarity protest outside of the St Louis City Justice Center. A memo by Data for Progress reported that the majority of likely voters supported some form of decarceration in response to the pandemic. Contrary to conservative talking points, decarceration is not an unpopular leftist policy; it is a humanitarian demand that most Americans support.

Many local and state governments seemed to follow along with the calls from protesters and public health officials, but those trends have started to reverse. A February article by Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza and Sean McElwee, of the Appeal, covered the return to the pre-pandemic norm:

Florida's Broward county, which reduced its jail population early in the pandemic to under 3,000 "for the first time in decades", now has about 3,500 people incarcerated – putting its jails at nearly 80% full. Even more dire are the situations in Texas's Harris county, which has jailed more than 9,000 people and has just 25 beds left, and California's Los Angeles county, where more people are being held before trial for longer than this time last year, before the pandemic.

Despite the uproar around the death of Preston Chaney, Harris county jail, where he died, is nearly full. And while President Joe Biden is gearing up to vaccinate as many Americans as possible, incarcerated people don't appear to be included, and he has not yet committed to stopping a Trump-era policy that will soon see thousands of low-level offenders sent back to federal prison.

The United States, from Biden's executive office down to the municipal level, must commit to releasing and providing care for as many people as possible – whether they be in jails, prisons or the concentration camps we've created for immigrants fleeing political realities created by US foreign policy. Prisons and jails have always served as warehouses in which our country can hide away the societal crimes of racism and poverty. The uprising at the St Louis City Justice Center was necessary and justified. It was a wake-up call and reminder that there is a hidden pandemic in the United States: our addiction to incarceration, which has led the supposed land of the free to become the home of the largest prison system on the planet. That sickness far predates Covid-19.

23 Apr - Spirit of Mandela Webinar on International Tribunal

WHAT: Webinar

WHEN: 8:00pm, Friday, April 23rd

WHERE: Online (details below)

COST: FREE

MORE:

In the Spirit of Mandela Coalition Invites you to an Urgent Webinar

As US Human Rights abuses ESCALATE, we need to take the case of We, the People to an INTERNATIONAL arena—like Minister Malcolm X and like those who "charged Genocide" before us. We are building for such a forum, to take place on October 22-24 in NYC and virtually...

Featuring

Jalil Muntaqim: recently released Black Panther political prisoner

Nkechi Taifa: author, advocate, and Tribunal Chief Prosecutor

Jihad Abdulmumit: National Jericho Movement

Pam Africa: International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu Jamal

Lenny Foster: American Indian Movement/International Indian Treaty Council

Dequi kioni-sadiki: Northeast Political Prisoner Coalition

A'isha Mohammad: spoken word poet, Oakland Jericho, National Jericho Movement

Matt Meyer: International Peace Research Association

To attend the webinar, register at crowdcast.io/e/international-tribunal