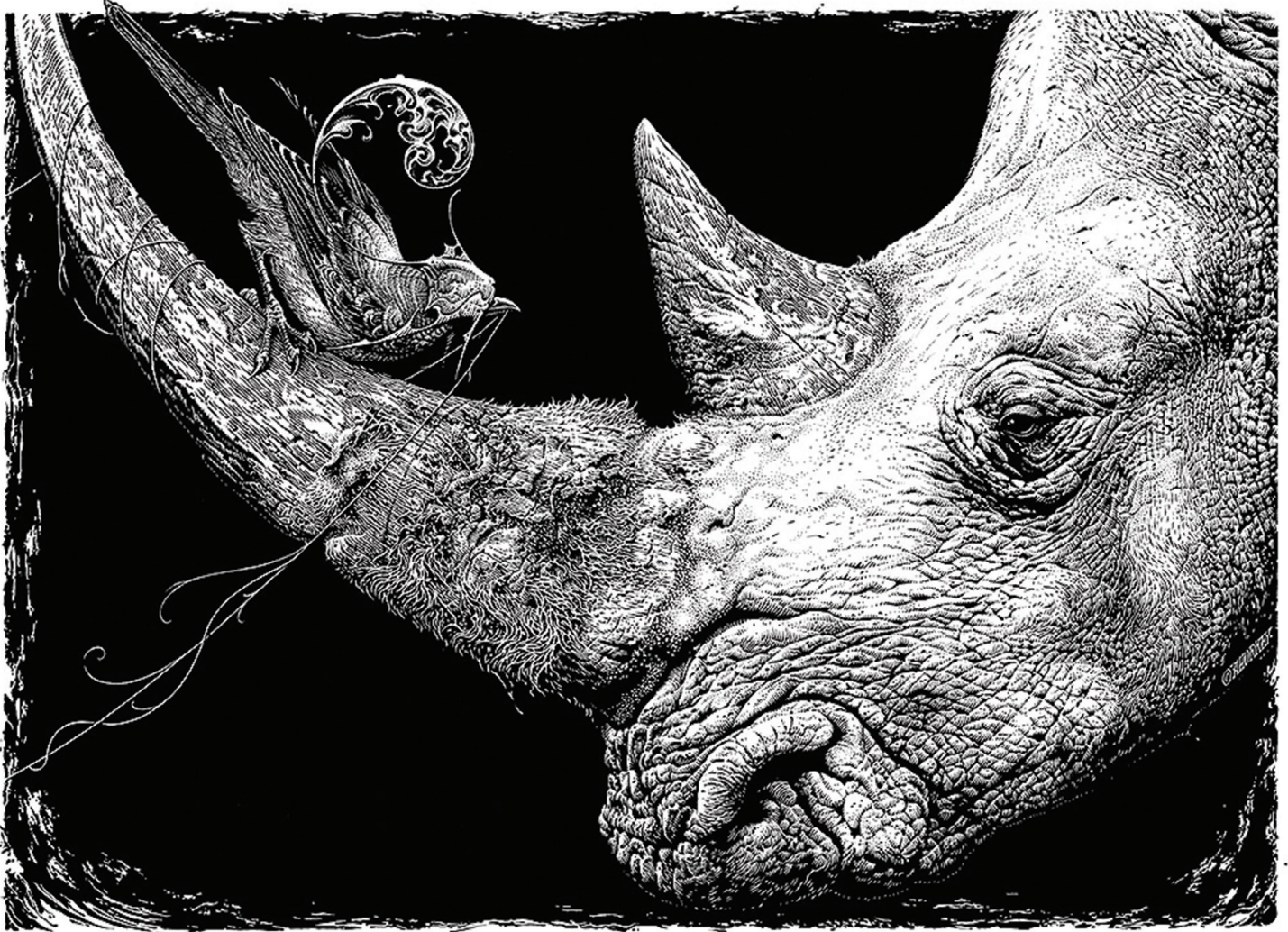
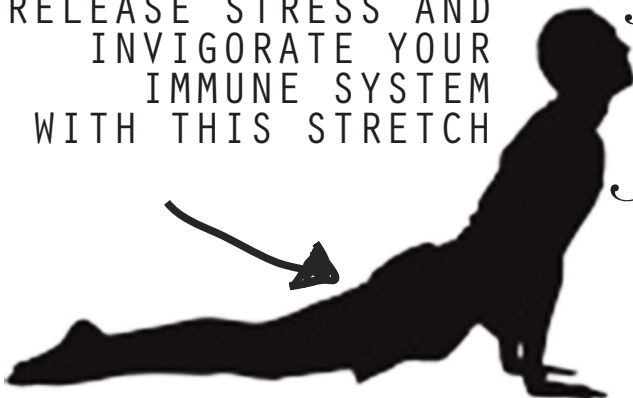


FALL FESTIVITIES FOR PRISONERS

A PRISONER PUBLICATION FOR MISSOURI AND BEYOND / OCTOBER 2015



RELEASE STRESS AND
INVIGORATE YOUR
IMMUNE SYSTEM
WITH THIS STRETCH



*Had I not created my
whole world,
I would have certainly
died in other people's.*

Anais Nin

hey there

The fall breeze and warm sunshine invigorate us, and we hope you get to feel it too from where you are. We realize there has been a lapse in time since the last issue of the newsletter. Life gets complicated, and as with all things, this project shifted and evolved to adapt to the changes. We are excited to be at it again. You can expect to see the publication every two months for the foreseeable future. We will try to let you know when that is different. Our goal is still to communicate reproducible ways of collective revolt and connect those of us on the outside to your struggles on the inside. Each of us is a part of the same fight.

Some of us recently had a bonfire on the equinox, when the sun rises directly in the east and sets directly in the west. Before the southward equinox, the sun rises and sets more and more to the north, and afterwards, it rises and sets more and more to the south. While we were gathered together, we got news of another hunger strike starting in a few days at Menard CC in Illinois and talked about how to support people there. Yesterday, about 40 of us converged on the prison from multiple cities with music and drums, yelling and banging pots and pans to make noise for those inside to hear us standing with them. In response, prisoners banged on the walls of their cages and screamed back through shuttered windows "Freedom," "We hear you," "No More A-D" [Administrative Detention] and "Hunger Strike." With our voices hoarse, we returned home with our networks on the outside stronger and, we hope, our connection to those inside stronger as well. Our efforts in compiling this newsletter and the ideas it contains are inseparable from these moments where we act together.

In this issue, we have a mix of things that feel pertinent and energizing to us. As we think it's important to know about recent situations of prison revolt, we feature a letter out of a prison in Nebraska where an uprising over the conditions took place this past May. The details of the events were inspiring to us, and we assume they will be to you as well. We also included an account of events in St. Louis after another police murder, addressing the reality of race tensions and the need for people of all races to come together against a common enemy. We have also included a critique of the Illuminati theories that seem to be so common within U.S. prisons. As always, we seek to take aim at those ideas that we see as holding back our collective efforts toward building a better world. Disagree? Write and let us know why.

In all these articles, you will notice a common theme of people connecting despite their racial differences and fighting together. We believe that race is a condition that has been forced upon us by a white ruling order that knows it can better control us if we are separated by race. Unfortunately, poor white people have a long history of buying into the myth of racial superiority, and aspiring to be like the slave master/boss/C.E.O./politician rather than plotting with people of other races to build a world without masters. In doing so, poor white people have abandoned poor black and brown people to the horrors of racial tyranny and damned themselves to a life of collaborating in the subjugation of those who they should be fighting alongside to end all of our collective misery. We hope to explore these themes further in the future, both in this newsletter and in the streets.

We have noticed an increase in the amount and quality of your responses, and we have included a handful of excerpts from your letters. Keep 'em coming. We are super energized by your thoughts and ideas about your life experience of resistance both on the streets and inside the prison walls. Be sure to spread this issue around to people around you who would be interested. The more we connect to like-minded people who dream and act for a different world, regardless of race or background, the stronger and bigger we are together against the cages that confine us.

august 10, 2014

have I ever been somewhere that feels so thoroughly
like nowhere I've ever been before?

it can't be understood from the outside
from the perimeter
from the radio
or the internet

cars run wild
like sunday on Hall Street
children share candy in the streets and predict
that tomorrow at school, they will eat well
toilet paper is popular

and I won't never be sad
that a gas station burns
don't call it a community
though I know a lot does happen at gas stations

even burnt-out shells
where one thousand viewpoints are suddenly aired
in the newly-created public
Mike Brown Plaza
and any street where people walk together

there is a joyousness to this party

like shit don't change
shit don't change
shit don't change

until one day
it does

because trauma lives in silence

America
do you forget yourself?
and how you have always been?
you feign surprise when those with whom you have been at
war
fight back

and we have no lamentation lords
or mourning priestesses

so where can grief go

let it not go back into our bodies

"I shall create! If not a note, a hole. If not an overture,
a desecration."

and I am here to say
it was not for nothing

because where can grief go
let it not go
back into our bodies

make the priorly invisible
visible

speak what has been unspoken, lately
and words are not the only way



Grand Tower, Mississippi River, 1780s-1800s

What follows is an excerpt from a forthcoming history of Missouri slavery and resistance.

At a place along the Mississippi River called Grand Tower lived a band of pirates. They were made up of former slaves, Native and African Americans and European indentured servants who'd fled Spanish colonies in Missouri.

Grand Tower is a naturally occurring rock formation that goes fifty feet into the air off the Missouri shore halfway between St. Louis and where the Ohio River meets the Mississippi near Cairo, IL. In an era before steamboats, Grand Tower was the perfect place to waylay merchant ships slowly making their way against the current. In addition to providing an excellent view of river traffic, it was also right next to a deceptively fast and dangerous part of the river. The pirates used this treacherous stretch to take boats by surprise. Whether this was a continuous community or a common spot used by different groups is unknown, as are the power dynamics that existed within it.

Francisco Cruzat, the Lieutenant-Governor of the St. Louis area in the 1780s, claimed this group of pirates (and similar bands along the Mississippi) were severely effecting river traffic between St. Louis and New Orleans. At times during this twenty year period when attacks were frequent, boats leaving New Orleans were ordered not to sail alone and with arms to guard against the pirates of Grand Tower.

These attacks happened at a time in the river's history when the concept of race, which had not yet existed, was violently being imposed from above (with enslavement, genocide and exploitation of Africans and Native Amer-

icans being the result) and the modern racial hierarchy was forming. If the intensity of these attacks is true, that means a tri-racial group of outlaws ignored these racial divisions and disrupted (if not halted at times) the consolidation of wealth and power into the hands of a few white men—the very individuals responsible for imposing race and benefiting from it through slavery, the fur trade, etc.

Attacks became so frequent in the early 1800s that a detachment of the U.S. Calvary, the dragoons, was dispatched in May 1803 to defeat the outlaws. The pirates responded by moving to a rock overhang along the Mississippi nearby called Sinner's Harbor. The dragoons left in frustration in September and the pirates moved back to Grand Tower. As the Illinois side became more settled over the next decade, the pirates eventually dispersed.

For hundreds of years, from the early days of European colonization, until well past the Civil War, throughout the United States, South America and the Caribbean, multi-racial bands of Native Americans, escaped slaves and poor whites lived together on the outskirts of society, living autonomously and waging war on colonial rule, slave society, and Reconstruction elites. These bands of outlaws survived by subsistence farming, hunting, mutual aid, and robbing surrounding plantations of crops, cattle and other goods. Areas under their control also served as places where slaves could seek refuge after escaping, and where raids on plantations and slave liberations could be planned. These groups, often called "Maroons," offer us a vision and a historical example of racial unity, autonomy, and resistance to the forces of domination and control that we still face to this day.

For more information about Maroons, check out the zine *The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Methods* by Russel "Maroon" Shoats available by request from Oak Root Press P.O. Box 775006, St. Louis, MO 63177.



Reportback from Behind Bars in Nebraska

In the southeastern corner of Nebraska, Tecumseh State Correctional Institution sits quite close to us and those of you locked up in Missouri and the surrounding states. In May of this year, prisoners of all colors came together, and a collective rebellion took place there. One doesn't have to look very far to find inspiration for tangible and reproducible ways of resisting in order to create ourselves on our own terms.

We received many letters from participants. One prisoner called his mom from the guard tower because it was Mother's Day. Another prisoner wrote in saying he was shot in the leg during the uprising — that they aim to kill him but he stands strong and they'd have to kill him for him not to. May excerpts from these letters out of TSCI inspire connection to conspire with one another. In the words of a prisoner there, "Until there are no prisons left, we must fight."

A prisoner account of the events:

A group of about sixty-five prisoners went to the main compound area and were confronted. They went together to hand guards a list of demands in response to continued horrible mistreatment and conditions. The guards became aggressive and began spraying mace, and prisoners fought back. Shots fired from the gun tower and all became quiet as prisoners and staff lay flat on the ground. Two prisoners were shot and injured. The guards regained control of the situation for a moment, but then their verbal taunts became too much. The group stood as one and began marching around the compound. Prisoners inside the housing units joined in at this time, making the group around 150-200 people. Guards ran for cover, locking everyone out of their housing units. The group tried to break into the gym to let out inmates who had been locked in. Fires started burning. Prisoners had control for several hours on two several days before guards regained control.

A prisoner reflection on the events:

It wasn't just me who stood up and made a courageous stand against these tone-deaf, arrogant, racist prison of-

ficials here at TSCI (Tecumseh State Correctional Institution). There were hundreds of men of all colors who stood up in the face of overwhelming power (guns, pepper spray, batons, etc.), which was unleashed upon us when we made our stand.

We all made sacrifices on May 10, 2015. A lot of men could have returned to their cells and locked down, but they didn't. They stood up against a system that has been about mistreating us for far too long. And not to mention all the injustice we were constantly seeing on TV every day. All the shootings and killings of unarmed people by pigs all throughout this country. This played a part in the "rage" as well. Men were walking around the gun tower with their hands up in the air chanting the now famous phrase, "Hands Up, Don't Shoot." They refused to lay down on the ground. They were fearless, no doubt about it. We came together and stood firm and never in fear of nothing.

Since the May uprising, we are still under an emergency lock-down. About 150-200 of us who have been identified as being "active participants" in the uprising have been placed in the SMU (special management unit). Myself and about 10 other men are being held in an area within the SMU, known as the IM (intensive management) gallery. We communicate by yelling through the vents at the bottom of the door. It's a hard way to do time, but we are getting through it. We lean on each other to keep each other's spirits up. When that cloud of melancholy descends on a brother, I be the first one on the door to offer words of encouragement. I know these walls can get to you if you let it.

The struggle continues. I clashed with these pigs a week ago. I was protesting them restricting my phone privileges. They (pigs) are doing all they can to find any reason to restrict us from using the phone. So they charged me with some petty arbitrary rule infraction to do just that. They don't want me on the phone because they know I'm able to connect with the people who support us on the outside.

So because I had the audacity to question and challenge their reasoning in revoking my phone privileges, they used this as justification to use force on me, claiming my actions and behavior was "threatening" (which is the common theme in describing Black and Latinos). But their attempts of intimidation have worked against them, for their cowardly actions have only fueled and strengthened our resolve!

So many guards have quit and walked off the job since May. So it appears to me that it's them who are having the morale problem (smiling). It's hard trying to manage men like us — men who don't fear their weapons, their threats, their intimidation tactics or even death! I was found guilty by the prison kangaroo court of mutinous actions and assault on staff. They have me 6 month segregation time, and I lost close to a year in good time. I shed no tears and have no regrets. In my opinion, it's money well spent. If you stand for nothing, you'll fall for anything.



INCARCERATION NEWS DIGEST ON THE INSIDE

On May 10, 40 inmates, upset over the lack of activities and poor living conditions at Nebraska's Tecumseh State Correctional Institution, attempted to deliver a petition to prison officials in the exercise yard. Officials responded by firing live ammunition and rubber bullets into the assembly. As a result, 200 prisoners took control of two housing units (including staff offices), set small fires, and damaged security cameras, fire sprinklers, windows, and even tore down a wall before guards retook control the following morning. In its wake, some segments of the prison remained unusable because of the half a million dollar in damages to the facility. During the takeover, prisoners used a phone in the offices to call the Lincoln newspaper to explain their actions: "This is not a white thing, or a black thing, this is a people thing."

-*Lincoln Journal Star*

On May 31, girls at Pasco Juvenile Detention Center in Land O' Lakes, FL, managed to steal keys from a guard and open doors inside the facility. This allowed other prisoners out of their cells who then attacked detention staff.

-*Pasco County News*

On June 11, prisoners at St. Clair Correctional Facility, in Springville, AL, engaged in a "big clash" with guards. 3 officers were injured and the officers in riot gear were dispatched to calm suppress the prisoners.

-*The St. Clair Times*

On June 13, a group of 200 immigrant detainees launched a hunger strike at Arizona's Eloy Detention Center. They were furious about the deaths of two fellow detainees a month earlier. They said the inmates were brutally beaten, placed for days in solitary confinement, and left there to die. They were also upset over getting paid \$1 per day for work and over poor medical treatment.

-*The Eloy Enterprise*

Prisoners in Canada's Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene, Ontario rioted for 6 hours on June 18. The riot began when 45 prison inmates in two separate units refused to be locked in their cells. After guards left, they began destroying meal hatch doors, cell doors, phones, duct work, and garbage bins. When prisoners refused to negotiate, a tactical team armed with pepper spray was sent in, but they were greeted to a surprise of floors coated with shampoo and soap creating a slippery situation for them. And to protect themselves from the guards, inmates had armed themselves

with solid steel meal hatch doors and socks filled with concrete. They were swinging them over their heads in a similar fashion to a medieval mace.

-*The Midland Mirror*

Prisoners at Arizona State Prison Complex in Kingman, Arizona, celebrated the July 4th weekend with three days of rioting. Family members say lack of air-conditioning and poor food had been a source of frustration among prisoners. Day one saw minimum-security prisoners create a "major disturbance." Day two saw the rioting spread to medium-security prisoners who became "non-compliant and caused significant damage" in two of the prisons five housing units. And day three saw the remaining three medium-security units suffer additional damages from rioting. Nearly 1200 prisoners at the 1500-bed facility were transferred to other facilities, after four of the five units were "virtually destroyed" and deemed uninhabitable. Ten days later, the guard believed to have started the rioting by pepper spraying a prisoner committed suicide at home.

-*Kingman Daily Miner*

On July 6, six youths at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility in Woodburn, Oregon barricaded themselves in a campus building after a confrontation with a guard. For four hours, they ripped holes in the walls, raided an area containing prescription medications, and broke water pipes, sinks, desks, chairs, windows, doors, medical carts, computers, computer monitors, and TVs. They refused to negotiate with Oregon State Police who finally used tear gas to move in and apprehend them.

-*Portland Tribune*

On July 23, around 30 prisoners at McKinley County Detention Center in Gallup, New Mexico clogged their drains to flood their cells. As several of them were being relocated, others set a fire and barricaded themselves in the pod.

-*The Gallup Independent*

On July 25, 22 asylum-seekers from India launched a hunger strike at Krome Immigration Detention Center in Miami, Florida, after the denial of a bond hearing.

-*The Miami Herald*

On July 29, over 80 prisoners at the Jefferson County Jail in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, rioted causing several thousand dollars in damage to the facility. The rioting came after jail security staff tightened security and restricted commissary and television privileges for the inmates. Surveillance footage captured at least one masked detainee covering one of the two cameras in the open jail pod with wet toilet paper just before the prisoners banded together to damage ceiling tiles, windows, duct work, the security system, and the sprinkler system.

-*KATV*

On July 30, county inmates being temporarily held at a State prison in Coal Township, Pennsylvania, launched a hunger strike. They were upset over a poor transition to services and treatment to which they were accustomed, including a lack of exercise equipment and access to the law library, limited religious services, and guards spitting chewing tobacco in trash cans and on floors.

-*WNEP*

On July 31, prisoners at Saskatoon Correctional Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, staged a small "disturbance." Using it as cover, six prisoners breached the ventilation system in a failed escape attempt.

-*CTV News*

Also on July 31, over 40 prisoners at Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah, launched a week-long hunger strike demanding less time spent in isolation, more access to prison programs, more flexible housing policies, and an end to squalid living conditions. Prison officials responded by confiscating televisions and commissary food from cells, curtailing personal television access, and restricting spending for food and other items. Some prisoners responded in kind by flooding

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WE HEARD FROM YOU

A letter from a prisoner in MO

"Greetings comrades. The struggle still strives. It doesn't simmer off behind the gate but blazes conflagration. For rebellion and making these capitalist pigs spend thousands of dollars, they had me shackled up feet and cuffs with hands chained to my stomach for 22 days. The shackles cut into my skin and caused a lot of pain, but I never waived in the face of injustice and tyranny. I'm in the seg unit with the rest of the rebellious rabble-rousers. Please send me the following zines and I will most definitely start a study group. It's easy because only 15 of us are in this 'hallway' and I occupy the last dead end cell."

A letter from a prisoner in MO

"I was out for August in Ferguson and have never seen anything so exciting or motivating for our city in my life. Never thought our people would step up and fight against what they call the law! I've read all the zines that you've sent and they're actually right up my alley. Everything that you strive for and stand for is exactly me! I got excited when I got your info and hoped you wouldn't mind me asking for newsletters and zines. I heard shit popped off in Ferguson again in regards to the bullshit in Baltimore. That's wassup. Wish I was there to put forth the effort with my fellow brothers and sisters. By the way, I got caught up in the Mike Brown shit in August also. I guess you could say in the right place at the right time, but by me being on parole already, they had to find a way to send me back. I'm not fucked up about it because I was doing something positive and powerful in my eyes. Fuck what they think. If I have the opportunity to do it again, I will in a heart beat! This is just a minor set back for a major come back. So I encourage you to continue to fight. It won't be long now. Our voices will be heard. If possible, put some of those powerful messages to me, and I will be sure to spread the word. Be safe and continue pushing!"

A letter from a prisoner in IL

"I was told there was another murder by police over there. I know you all watched the rebellion in Baltimore. In the ghetto-prisons across Amerikkka there is growing insurrectionary potential. This potential will persist because of the built-in repressive nature of the state. The nature of the functioning of police forces in the ghettos mandates murder, terror and brutality for purposes of containment. So there will be another Baltimore, Ferguson, etc. – that's just the nature of the beast."

I think these are critical times for the oppressed in this country. People are starting to slip the chains of false consciousness more and more. And the mental slaves of the state are scrambling to put people back in those chains. However, I drew lu-

minous hope from the young woman of the black lives matter movement when she said they understand that the system is not designed for them, therefore, they're taking the fight to the United Nations and also building a "Black Spring" movement. Now I have my thoughts about the UN, but what's important is that the people are starting to take their consent to be enslaved back! They are beginning to question the legitimacy of the state. And taking it to the world stage starts the process of de-legitimizing the state. Wouldn't you agree?

Well, dehumanization is still the order of the day in here. Everyday is a constant quest for survival. These zombies inflicted more psychological violence on us by taking away a 'yard' day. The more they keep us cooped up in these cages, the more they try to diminish our humanity. I hope the spring and summer will be bursting with unrest out there, because as you said, 'Our fights are bound up together.'"

Thank you for staying in touch across the walls that divide. Give all the rads my deepest and highest regards and salutations."

A letter from a prisoner in AL

"Apart from others I've come across during this journey of twelve plus years, your newsletter was heartfelt. It's as if I could feel the vibrations, the intensity of everyone who took part in it. The words read themselves; I just sat back and absorbed the energy further fueling my will to fight for change until the death of me!"

Lord knows we feel the struggle down here in old sweet home Alabama. Hell, we've been shackled up for over a century and by the looks of things they don't plan on freeing us anytime soon. The system, either they kill us in cold blood like Oscar, Trayvon and Sean or they lock us away until we die mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically – whichever comes first and many of us will face them all one by one. Genocide in it's purest form.

You're absolutely right that the time is now. We'll either live for something or die for nothing in 2015! RIP Ladarius Williams, Isaac Holmes, Antonio Martin, and Vonderrit Myers Jr. Best believe it's far from over. Until we make a change there won't be one. Like 2 Pac said, It's time to fight back/That's what Huey said/Two shots in the dark/Now Huey's dead/I got love for my brothers/But we can never go no where, unless we care for each other/We've got to start making changes/Learn to see me as your brother/Instead of two distant strangers! Amen to that. Black lives matter baby. No more putting our lighters up . . . In the words of Malcom – by any means necessary; It's time we start to light it up."

A letter from a prisoner in CA

"The riots in Baltimore and elsewhere recently remind me of my early days in the 1984 downtown LA street scene and the 1986 OP Pro/Huntington Beach riot I was in! I was just a young punk rocker/skater back then running wild in the streets. So I can identify with youth in Ferguson and Baltimore regardless of race, whether black, white or brown, we are rebels."

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their cells by breaking sprinklers, covering up their cell windows, and refusing to submit to handcuffs so officers could enter their cells.
-*The Salt Lake Tribune*

On August 12, inmates at Silverdale correctional facility in Chattanooga, Tennessee, started a 5-hour long riot that significantly disrupted the court schedule the following day.
-*WDSI-Chattanooga*

On August 14, 11 detainees began a hunger strike at Krome Immigrant Detention Center in Miami, Florida. The strikers, 10 from Pakistan and one from Armenia, demanded to have a lowered bond and to be released. Last month, a hunger strike by 22 inmates at the same facility ultimately resulted in their release.
-*Miami Herald*

On August 16, prisoners at Ontario, Canada's Toronto South Detention Centre refused meals for three days upset over increasingly routine lockdowns in their 12x8-foot cell, without access to showers, yard time, or visits from family or lawyers. They also were upset over not having enough TV time and water leaking from the showers, making floors dangerously slippery.
-*Toronto Star*

On August 30, inmates at the Baltimore (Maryland) Pre-Trial Complex refused to "lock-in" to their dormitories after an argument between an officer and a detainee. Detainees then attacked officers before barricading themselves in the dorms. Media reported that inmates were frustrated because they had previously been held two to a cell, but are now held in larger dorm-style rooms. Eight guards and six detainees were injured in the riot.
-*Baltimore Sun*

On September 23, inmates in the administrative detention unit of Menard Correctional Center in Chester, Illinois, began a hunger strike demanding better conditions since no changes have been made since hunger strikes of last year.
-*Randolph County Herald Tribune*

ON THE OUTSIDE

Protesters outside the immigrant detention center in Santa Ana, CA, took over a busy intersection outside the facility on May 28. They demanded an immediate end to detention and deportation, starting with the release of undocumented transgender women held inside the jail.
-*The Orange County Register*

On July 10, dozens of undocumented immigrants blocked the roads

WRITE TO US

IF YOU WANT TO RECEIVE A ZINE CATALOG / BE ADDED OR REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST / TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT A ZINE OR WHAT YOU'VE READ IN THIS PUBLICATION.

OAK ROOT PRESS
PO BOX 775006
ST LOUIS, MO 63177

We do not know anything about the law so we cannot help with legal support. We are also not a dating service. So please do not ask us for those kind of things. If you are a rapist of any kind, and you don't think that is a problem, do not bother writing to us. We dream of a world where rapists along with prisons (and all forms of power-over), do not exist.

*"All their designs are
plans for a prison:
our lives are
its demolition.
There is no design
for freedom."*

Anonymous author of Evansville: Heterotopia

outside the federal New Orleans Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office demanding an end to the raids and unjust removals they say are continuing after the President's executive action announcement. On blockader said: "If ICE is going to be out in the streets then we will too."
-*WWL-TV-New Orleans*

On July 18, more than 100 people protested outside the Waller County Jail in Hempstead, Texas. They were angered over the suspicious death of a woman inmate at the facility earlier in the week. Authorities claimed she hung herself, but a witness videotape of her arrest showed police had roughed her up.
-*The Waller Times*

On August 3rd, several dozen demonstrators blocked a key intersection for two hours in downtown Seattle next to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office. This I.C.E. office oversees the nearby Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington. The demonstrators, primarily concerned over the treatment of transgender inmates, also called for the abolition of all detention centers and prisons.
-*The Seattle Times*

On August 22, for the second time in a week, protesters marched into the lobby of the Dallas County Jail in Texas furious over the killing of a man who three weeks prior ran into the jail looking for help. Sheriff deputies responded to his pleas for help by pinning him to the ground, resulting in his death. Riot police were called to force protesters from the lobby.
-*WFAA-Dallas*

On August 23, dozens of people marched into the Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, Alabama after visitation to immigrant detainees was abruptly cut off by authorities.
-*The Gadsden Times*

On August 28, protesters in St. Paul, Minnesota, blocked the doors to the upscale Whole Foods Market because the store profits from selling fish and cheese produced by Colorado prison inmates.
-*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

On September 4, 50 people noisily marched around the Santa Clara County Main Jail in San Jose, California. They were angry after guards beat to death a prisoner there a week earlier.
-*San Jose Mercury News*

On September 23, around 40 demonstrators marched to the administrative detention unit of Menard Correctional Center beating drums and pots and pans in support of the hunger strike going on there. Through their windows, the strikers heard the noise and shouted back and forth with the demonstrators: "We hear you!" and "No A.D.!" and "Freedom!" and "Hunger Strike!"
-*Randolph County Herald Tribune*



In the late morning of August 19, 2015, St. Louis police shot and killed 18-year-old Mansur “Man-Man” Ball-Bey. Within hours people shouted the police off the block and then gathered in the intersection where he had been killed. Just before sunset as a rainbow appeared in the sky, armored vehicles drove up and down the streets and alleyways firing tear gas to try to disperse those blocking traffic and throwing bricks at the police. By nightfall, fires dotted the neighborhood as yet another riotous night unfolded in response to continued police killings.

There are many things that can divide us from each other as human beings. Sometimes these lines make sense and are helpful. At other times, they work against us and what we want. There are also lots and lots of things that can bring us together.

In confrontations with the police, CO's or others who have power over us, we are bigger and stronger against them if we can come together in the face of things that normally divide us. We can do this if we remember who the real enemy is.

On the afternoon the police killed Mansur Ball-Bey, I stood with people in the street near where he died, and there was a moment when I felt like I didn't belong there. Soon after, a black man in a work vehicle drove past people standing in the street and added to the tension that was in the air. He leaned out the truck and said, “What are ya'll crackers doin' here?”

Some young black women in the crowd responded by saying, “We know why they're here.” One of the young women then looked at me and said, “Ya'll good.” Shortly after, I went over and thanked them, saying I had lots of reasons to hate the police and that was why I was there.

The tensions are real here in the street —specifically between blacks and whites. There are moments where I feel the whiteness of my skin glowing amongst mostly black people, when my utter hatred for the police doesn't feel like it's enough. There are also many moments in which the different colors of our skin are invisible, and people act together against the police in spite of the role race plays in every other moment of our lives.

The interaction with those several young women in the afternoon began to build a bridge for me that helped ease the race tension, at least for the rest of the night. Throughout the evening we found each other, exchanged jubilant conversation and laughter, posed to take photographs together and talked about what our plans were as the night went on. They lived on the block where Mansur was killed.

At one point as the police advanced towards us, more and more people came off the corners and sidewalks to gather in the street. I started to chant, “Fuck 12” over and over again. My new friends joined in—chanting and laughing. Later on I asked, “What you laughing at? You laughing because I'm white?” They smiled and nodded their heads, “yes.”

A prisoner in Georgia recently wrote to us, talking about his experiences of people of different races coming together during moments of collective rebellion:

My experience of coordinating a revolt truthfully comes from the individual and his willingness to network and move collectively with other individuals, for and towards a common goal. The prison strike manifested from a build up from years of individual sit downs and disturbances all grounded in the mistreatment of the men and women of this slave system. Through word of mouth individuals came to the table with sets goals and demands for their participation. As for coordination goes, all it took was for some solid brothers - black, white and latino - to talk and each to reach across race lines. When it comes to a man giving and keeping his word, well in prison, a man's word is all he has so once all came into agreement it all boiled down to the individuals keeping his given word.

Through word of mouth the airwaves broadcasted the movement months ahead of said date and the “good old boy federation” added fuel to the fire. The DOC started a campaign to quell the movement but only gave all the prisoners a reason to rebel, resist and defy this slave system. We elected no head, only a mass undertaking so no one could be targeted individually. There are no set rules to organizing and coordination when it comes to revolution. It manifests itself at a moment's notice and the rest falls into place. It's a moment in time in which every individual wants to be a part of something that is right and that will become a part of history no matter how great or small the part or effect on the system itself. The power is in the individuals who have chosen to move collectively as one for a great purpose.

We need each other. It is crucial to draw clear lines between us and the people whose roles in society allow them to hold power over us — like the police over people, CO's over prisoners, bosses over workers, for example. These lines help us defy the social prescriptions that limit our potential to come together across race lines to creatively find ways to rebel against those who exert power over us. With the surge of anti-police revolts that have continued over the past year or more in the country and specifically here in St. Louis and nearby areas, I have felt tensions around race both heighten and dissolve. The hope is that these experiences will translate across the prison walls so that groups of people regardless of race can stand together against those holding the keys.



*How does a policeman torture a fly?
(It traps it in a glass and eats shit.)*



"The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852

What follows is an excerpt from the zine 'How to Overthrow the Illuminati', which gives a history of the roots of Illuminati theories, their arrival in urban black ghettos following the collapse of the Black Power movement of the 1970's, a critique of their logical underpinnings and a suggestion of another way to view the forces of control that operate in our lives. From what we hear, Illuminati theories are very popular in U.S. prisons, and serve as one of the many bullshit distractions keeping prisoners from coming together and focusing on their real enemy: the prison system itself and the systems of domination that rely upon it and uphold it. The enemy is not some secret band of all-powerful god-like rulers controlling everything; it's the bricks, bars and fences that keep you from freedom and all those working to keep them in place.

How to Overthrow the Illuminati By Will, Chino, Saudade and Mamos

Everyone talks about the Illuminati. You may have heard Jay Z and Beyonce are members of the Illuminati, and channel demons when they perform. You may have heard Obama is a member of the Illuminati, and plans to implant microchips in all U.S. citizens, to prepare for martial law. You may have heard the dollar bill contains secret symbols, which reveal the U.S. has been controlled by the Illuminati for hundreds of years.

Illuminati theory helps oppressed people to explain our experiences in the hood. Society throws horrible stuff in our faces: our family members get locked up for bullshit. Our friends kill each other over beefs, money or turf. Our future is full of dead-end jobs that don't pay shit. We struggle to pay bills while others live in luxury. On TV, we see people all over the world dying in poverty, even though we live

in the most materially abundant society in history. Most people act like none of these terrible things are happening. Why does this occur? We start looking for answers, and Illuminati theory provides one.

We believe Illuminati theory is wrong, and we wrote this pamphlet to offer a different answer. We wrote this pamphlet because we know people who think about the Illuminati usually want to stop oppression and exploitation. They're some of the smartest people in the hood today. Forty years ago, Illuminati theorists would've been in the Black Panther Party. Today most of them sit around and talk endlessly about conspiracies. This is a waste of talent. The world is in a deep crisis, and big protests, rebellions and revolutions are happening. In Egypt, South Africa, Turkey—and even in the U.S.—these movements are already taking place. People who say we can't do anything because no one else is fighting are simply refusing to join the fight themselves. With the right tools, we can participate in these actions, and make history with millions of others.

Why Illuminati Theory Doesn't Work

There are several logical shortcomings to Illuminati theory. Here are five main reasons that Illuminati theory isn't a useful explanation of the world.

1. Illuminati theory sees everything as connected, and leaves no room for coincidences or mistakes. Illuminati theorists tie every major world event to the Illuminati. They believe every event in human history is carefully watched, planned, or even controlled by conspiratorial groups. They leave no room for coincidence: Illuminati theorists believe everything happens for a reason that everything is willed.

This view of history ignores that a gap always exists between what individuals or groups try to do, and what ends up happening. This gap is a fact. It exists for the rich and powerful just like everyone else. Even the U.S. government,

the most powerful government in the world, cannot stop dozens of major events every year, from natural disasters to bureaucratic screwups. There are always contingencies, coincidences, chance events, and mistakes.

2. Illuminati theory makes the enemy out to be all-powerful. Because Illuminati theory denies that history involves chance and mistakes, it makes the Illuminati seem god-like. This is like when peasants used to say that kings were untouchable gods, and could not be overthrown. The truth is, there is no social group so powerful that humanity cannot overthrow it. When the French revolution came, the king and queen were beheaded. In every period in history, myths arise that make the rulers seem invincible. With every transition to a new period, these myths are always shattered.

3. Illuminati theory fails to make basic logical or scientific arguments. When people talk about Illuminati theories, they vaguely suggest there is a connection between groups and events, rather than demonstrating exactly how they are connected. For example, an Illuminati theorist might say "an earthquake happened the same day Obama made a speech using earthquake metaphors. This was not a coincidence." The Illuminati theorist hints there is a connection, but doesn't say what it is. Did Obama cause the earthquake? Why was he trying to drop hints about who caused it? They leave it up to your imagination. This lets the Illuminati theorist avoid having to demonstrate and prove the connection

he or she is hinting at. Most of the time, if the connection were described openly, it would seem silly or implausible.

In reality, there is plenty of evidence of what the capitalist class does on a daily basis. Most capitalist plans for economic and foreign policy are printed openly in the pages of the Economist and the Wall Street Journal. We can see them disagreeing publicly, and we can see that sometimes their plans don't work out. Sure, there are some secrets, but as Wikileaks and Ed Snowden show, even these can be exposed by courageous people willing to take action. And most of their secrets are actually "open secrets": information is available in public libraries and websites, but people are so overwhelmed by the volume of information available that we don't have time or energy to sort out what's important.

4. Illuminati theory is impossible to disprove. Illuminati theorists have a clever way of attacking anyone who argues against them: they say "that's just what they want you to think." Of course, Illuminati theorists never ask how they've avoided being tricked themselves. This argument is a trap, because it never considers any evidence trustworthy, and so it doesn't allow you to weigh the accuracy or usefulness of any theory. How do we know that all the conspiracy theories on YouTube aren't actually produced by the Illuminati? How do we know that Illuminati theory itself isn't a government hoax, designed to convince people that it's impossible to fight back? Or that Behold a Pale Horse isn't an Illuminati hoax? The logical traps are endless. Once you go down this road, you throw out any effort to really understand the world, or weigh theories and evidence about how it works.

5. Illuminati theory offers no viable solutions to the problems it tries to explain. Ultimately Illuminati theorists have no strategy, no game plan, no way out for billions of oppressed people on this planet. If the enemy is all-powerful and most people are duped, then there's nothing that can be done. All they can do is constantly talk about conspiracies, and complain that people are brainwashed and will never wake up.

The truth is, masses of ordinary people have the ability to change society. History has shown it over and over again. Illuminati theorists are searching for answers about why society is fucked up. If masses of people aren't asking the same question, it's not because they're stupid: it's because they don't think it's possible to change things, and so don't bother looking any deeper. Theories only move people to action when they provide an accurate explanation of the things they are experiencing, and offer viable ways for them to act to change things. Illuminati theory offers neither.

Illuminati theory is inherently elitist, conservative, inaccurate and illogical. Ultimately, it is unable to explain oppression and exploitation, or help us figure out how to stop it. To truly stop oppression and exploitation, we need an accurate analysis of where they come from...

The complete version of the zine is available by request from Oak Root Press, P.O. Box 775006, St. Louis, MO 63177.

