

# FEBRUARY NEWS & VIEWS



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MARCH 2014

A PRISONER PUBLICATION FOR MISSOURI AND BEYOND

## Its Ours

by Charles Bukowski

there is always that space there  
just before they get to us  
that space  
that fine relaxer  
the breather  
while say  
flopping on a bed  
thinking of nothing  
or say  
pouring a glass of water  
from the spigot  
while entranced by  
nothing

that  
gentle pure  
space

it's worth  
centuries of  
existence

say

just to scratch your neck  
while looking out the window at  
a bare branch

that space  
there  
before they get to us  
ensures  
that  
when they do  
they wont  
get it all

ever.



## COMBATING THE ISOLATION OF PRISON LIFE

*There is a space inside of us that they cannot get to, that they cannot access or master - and therein lies some amount of valuable control in a place where they don't want us to have any.*

WHEN YOU FEEL OUT OF CONTROL, THINK ABOUT THE THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL.

You can always control your breath. Breathe in your nose and out of your mouth. Bring awareness to your body.

You can control your eye movements. Try blinking rapidly or fixating on something pleasant or closing them and going somewhere else in your mind.

*What else can you control when you are or feel out of control in order to gain a sense of calm or strength? Let us know what you think of.*

# HELLO

The dead of winter is upon us. Here in St. Louis a blanket of fresh snow covers the ground. We feel bits of the isolation and immobility that can set in this time of year. Yet we press on because not even the depths of winter can extinguish the roaring fire in our hearts that blazes for a world without cages of any kind.

A month has passed since the first newsletter. We are thrilled to have heard back from those of you that received it! Some of you requested zine catalogs, and we are excited to send those out and get you some subversive reading material. Maybe you'll find even just one other person to have a reading group with and talk about what you've read. Some of you are curious as to how we got your contact information. Many of us have been involved with sending literature into prisons in various cities and states over the past decade and through the years people's contact information has passed between various groups. We also keep our eyes on news sources for people who inspire or intrigue us. If you want to be removed from our mailing list, just let us know.

What has most enlivened us has been hearing from you about your hate for prisons, your experiments against isolation and your resistance of any kind. Recently when people on the outside heard news of a hunger strike just across the river, they got together with some friends to talk about how we could respond. This resulted in people gathering to make noise outside the prison so folks inside would hopefully know they are not alone. Our hearts were elated when a week later an article confirmed that folks inside both saw and heard the noise! There is much possibility for those of us who resist. Be sure to let us know of exciting things going on where you are when they happen.

Even in the dead of winter, we will not stop.



## FROM CATCHING FIRE PART II of the HUNGER GAMES

PRESIDENT SNOW: YOU CAN'T KNOW THIS, BUT PEOPLE VIEWED YOUR LITTLE TRICK WITH THE BERRIES AS AN ACT OF DEFIANCE, NOT AS AN ACT OF LOVE. AND IF A GIRL FROM DISTRICT 12 OF ALL PLACES CAN DEFY THE CAPITAL AND WALK AWAY UNHARMED, WHAT IS TO PREVENT THEM FROM DOING THE SAME? WHAT IS TO PREVENT, SAY, AN UPRISING, THAT CAN LEAD TO...REVOLUTION? AND THEN IN A FRACTION OF TIME, THE WHOLE SYSTEM COLLAPSES...

KATNISS EVERDEEN: IT MUST BE A FRAGILE SYSTEM IF IT CAN BE BROUGHT DOWN BY JUST A FEW BERRIES.

PRESIDENT SNOW: YES IT IS INDEED...

THE ODDS ARE NEVER IN OUR FAVOR

# WE HEARD FROM YOU

ZINE REVIEW by an Ohio Prisoner



Did you hear about  
the two guys who  
stole a calender?

They each got 6 months.



## A LETTER FROM UHURU

*A letter from a friend in prison in Missouri, responding to a discussion of anarchists squatting houses in St. Louis (illegally taking over and living in abandoned houses)*

“... I dig the squatter thing you relayed. Before I became conscious of the movement me and my guys did the same, but we called them “traps,” short for trap houses. All of the utilities were ciphered and all of the furnitures was relieved :) Hahaha. If they cut it off, we cut it right back on. I noticed that the urban street mentality is ‘similar’ to the anarchists, not wholistically, but comparable. We hate the pig (authority) and we took what we needed to survive and anyone who was an impediment was corrected or removed. If the genocidal thought process was broken and the tribal (hood) conflicts would cease, it’ll be closer. But we had to break the chains of ‘psychological slavery’ that was taught to us on these wretched shores by the fascist/imperialist.”

“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”  
by Ursula K LeGuin

In this selection, as with all of her work, she writes in a poetic prose. Her style of writing serves her well, as it lulls the reader into a sing-song description of her seemingly-utopian Omelas.

This short-story is symbolically-instructive, critical of our collective compromises that modern civilization requires of us and advocating the abandonment of the recourse to oppression that this way of life demands. For such a short work, and fiction at that, it inspires critical thought - awesome as an introductory selection for an anti-civilization reading group.

*Let us know if you want a copy of this zine!*

## FROM A PRISONER AT JCCC

*In the last newsletter we asked you to let us know about your experiments with challenging your brain to do new tasks in an effort to combat the isolation they intend for those of us in prison to endure. Here is one exciting reply.*

“Experiment: I feel most comfortable sleepin on my side. So I’ve been trying to sleep on my back. And I wrote this with my left hand.”

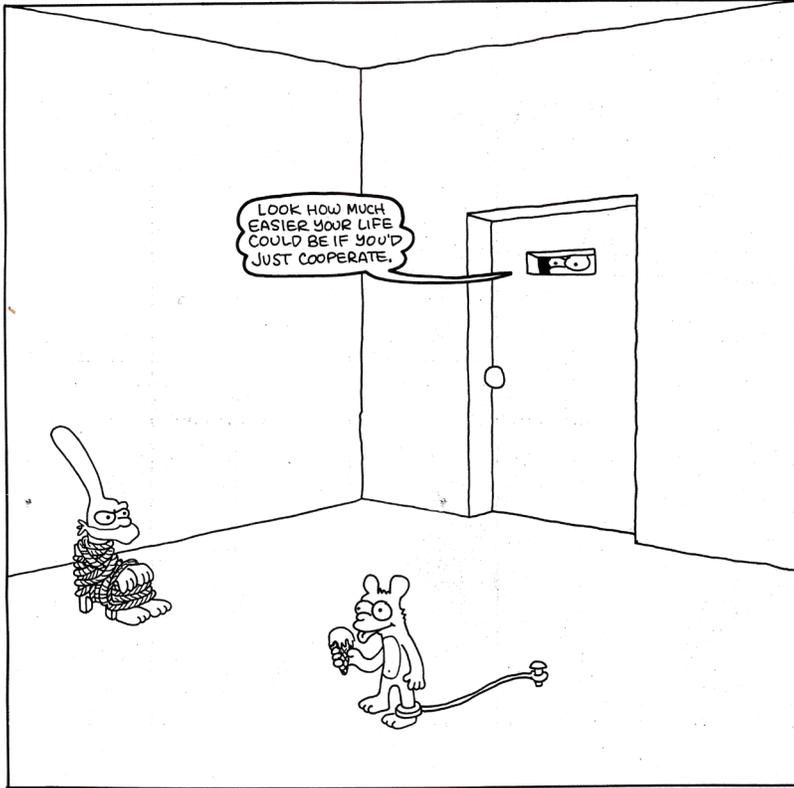
## A BIT OF NEWS

Mid-January, 2014 riots in the northern city of Burgos spread to 46 solidarity protests in cities across Spain. Residents of Burgos were infuriated by plans to hire notoriously corrupt contractors to change one of the city’s main thoroughfares into an 8 million Euro (\$10.9 million) boulevard, congesting traffic and replacing free parking with paid underground parking. The expensive project comes during a time of government cuts in funding to education, healthcare and other social programs and when unemployment is 25%. Austerity, gentrification and violence by police resulted in riots in Burgos where 11 police officers were injured and in Madrid where 5 police officers were injured. Rioting in Burgos lasted at least 5 days and has successfully stopped the proposed boulevard project.

*-BBC.co.UK, Reuters and the Washington Post*

LIFE IN HELL

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MATT  
GROENING



## JUSTICE

An excerpt from the upcoming zine *Burning Bridges*, a collection of writings by one St. Louis anarchist

The judicial system, unlike what many say, is not broken or corrupt. Sometimes things that aren't broken are actually just fucked up to start with. The judicial system works as it is intended and it only seeks to do a better job of suppressing any authenticity in the world. If anything, it's not working well enough.

The torture while in jail or prison, the seemingly never-ending continuances, the Corrections Officers who either scream at you or ignore you, the incoherent bureaucracy that no one wants to deal with: all of these things are inherent aspects of the justice system. When dealing with the job of trying and judging physical people you have a lot to think of. Where you will put them if they are convicted. How you will feed them. When you can set trial. There are encyclopedias of legal jargon for lawyers to go through. It's impossible for it not to fucking suck.

The objective of the judicial system (and by default the State) is to deal with surplus populations around the world that are a burden to those who have money or power. We are viewed as an abstraction of arms and legs with no depth other than our use and value. Surplus populations act as a pool for Capitalists and States to recruit for their biddings. This could mean numerous things. It could be mean being forced to pay money for food and a place to live; or being employed to work for a capitalist; being sent to war so that they can to acquire more people to employ, enslave and gain more physical resources from the conquered territory.

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## INCARCERATION NEWS DIGEST

### ON THE OUTSIDE

Seventy demonstrators rang in the new year outside the federal Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City. Demonstrators made noise with drums, air horns, pots & pans, chants, and a small marching band while prisoners inside flickered lights in response.

-*New York Times*, January 2

Protestors celebrated New Year's Eve outside the King County Juvenile Detention in Seattle, Washington, setting off fireworks and throwing paint at the facility.

-*The Capitol Hill Times*, January 2

Under the Banner "No More Money for Jails," dozens of demonstrators rallied in downtown Santa Cruz, California, against the expansion of Rountree Detention Center in Watsonville.

-*Bay Area Independent Media*, January 18

Officials arrested six protesters outside the Travis County Jail in Austin, Texas, who blocked the entrance to the jail during a demonstration to stop the deportation of the inmates inside.

-*Texas Tribune*, February 3

### ON THE INSIDE

Prisoners at Florida's Moore Haven Correctional Institution engaged in a sit-down strike until their demands were met (the removal of policies of taking money out of prisoner's commissary for each visitation and each disciplinary report.)

-*Fox4 News Ft. Myers*, January 6

Officials reported that multiple jail guards were assaulted as inmates at Fremont County Jail in Canon City, Colorado, attempted to riot.

-*Canon City Daily Record*, January 9

Thirty-three prisoners at the U.S. military's Guantanamo Bay prison facility remained on hunger strike after more than 12 years of imprisonment without charges.

-*The Guardian*, January 12

Indiana prison officials resumed serving hot lunches to prisoners at Westville Correctional Facility after prisoners there had launched a week-long hunger strike after months of enduring cold sack lunches.

-*WFHB Bloomington*, January 20

Twenty-five inmates in the High Security Unit at Menard Correctional Center in Illinois went on hunger strike against severe isolation, poor food and living conditions, and mail delays. A week into the strike, 20 supporters gathered outside the facility making noise loud enough for those inside to hear and shout back "We Love You!"

-*Riverfront Times*, January 21

A prisoner at Potosi Correctional Center is on hunger strike to try to meet his demands for a transfer.

- *Riverfront Times*, January 23



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

JUSTICE *continued* . . .

So, anyone that is not a productive abstract body or who is in the way of profit and power is a problem that needs to be neutralized in some way. Whether that's through mass employment when times are good, reformation of unproductive behavior by indoctrination, or the ghettoization of certain populations to part of cities. If totally hopeless: imprisonment.

This surplus population in the US usually involves people of color because the material basis of American society from the start has been reproduced from the genocide, enslavement and exploitation of people of color, as well as the suppression of counter-narratives that go against white supremacy (which means harsh repression of people of color for being people of color). But no matter the excuse or place, the State will always justify its dynamic handlings of its populations by some made up story of supremacy.

I cannot look upon the State and its judicial system as just something that oppresses me or just makes me a powerless victim. It oppresses because the existence of any life form that the State cannot understand or pacify is a threat. We are not innocent people who are helpless and oppressed by the big bad evil Justice system. We are, if we would only recognize it, uncontrollable and unique people stuck in a fucked society

that can't help but make for crazy situations. We do so many questionable and horrible things to each other, but really I feel it has more to do with the violent reality of power and capital. Sure, we are oppressed by the State, but the State is something born out of the inherent conflict of those with capital and power against those with little or none. It's setup out of conflict.

It is also not useful to look upon this as a problem of better law and order or of less oppression as the end goal, because even then there must be the whole charade of public defenders, paid lawyers, judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, etc., to rely upon. Then there's still the horrible fear of being locked away in probation, jails and prisons because some law you broke calls for it.

As long there is law and order, there will be constant conscious and unconscious battles against it. These systems are not capable of handling the utter disregard so many have for capitalist and state law and order. This disregard is not necessarily based on some inherent anti-state or anti-capitalist desire, but rather is more just the incompatibility our bodies and minds have with any system that seeks greater and greater control of all our activities. This does not mean all "crimes" are wonderful (they aren't), it just means that the very society that is all about preserving law and order cannot help but create crooks, rapists, murderers, insurgents or whatever.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF OS CANGACEIROS

An Adapted Excerpt from Crimethinc Podcast #4

*This history of material resistance to prisons offers us inspiration in our moments of isolation and despair. In our recent history in Missouri, our resistance is much more scattered and short-lived than the story of Os Cangaceiros, but as the News Digest in this newsletter shows, it is no less real. Remembering times when rebels led coordinated attacks on prison infrastructure can remind us of all that is possible.*

In 1989, the French government launched a reorganization of the French penitentiary system, called the “Program of the 13,000” in an effort to bring about a more totally surveilled society. The declared aim was to create 13,000 new “spaces” for prisoners in order to alleviate overcrowding. It was a modern prison system promising security through new technologies capable of constantly controlling the prisoner in each of his movements in a discreet and aseptic way.

Os Cangaceiros took up this challenge launched by the French government and, starting in April 1989, began a long campaign of sabotage at the construction sites, as well as managing to steal the new building blueprints. This group of antagonistic workers had emerged from the social struggles that occurred in France in May 1968—already a collection of petty criminals, social outlaws and the willing accomplices of prisoners. The term cangaceiro was a pejorative used to refer to bands of poor peasants who inhabited the northeastern deserts of Brazil, wearing leather clothing and hats and armed with revolvers, shotguns and long narrow knives.

As reflected by their title, Os Cangaceiros lived simple lives and used simple tools. They wrote, “We don’t just talk about violence; it is our element, our everyday fate... the conditions we are forced to live in... Our tools of action are those that any proletarian uses: sabotage and vandalism. We don’t do symbolic actions; we create disorder, as workers in struggle commonly know how to do when they blockade roads and railroads, sabotage materials, television transmitters, etc...”

The simplicity made struggle easy to reproduce, and within weeks similar eruptions had spread throughout France. After more than a year of sabotage, Os Cangaceiros obtained 10,000 addresses of residents in the vicinity of future prisons to whom they sent extracts of a huge collection of files containing dates and information about the institutions of punishment that were being built. And in November 1990, they published all this information, entitled “Thirteen Thousand Escapes.” The dossier contained accurate technical documentation about the many prisons under construction or in the process of being restructured, with general outlines; information about materials used; fixtures; controls of access, doors and locks; electric and hydraulic systems; sanitation; roofing; and external installations. And, above all, there are detailed little maps of every building and its

particulars.

*Each year that the State-form is in existence (that is, as long as there are governments and other forms of centralized authority in place) they continue to perfect their systems for pulling us under their umbrellas of control. Some of these systems mask themselves as attempts at “helping” us—such as Child Protective Services policing our parenting, or the psychiatric medical establishment policing our moods and medicating us if they are unacceptable to power. Surveillance cameras on every corner, extra cops on the beat and more room in an ever-increasing number of prisons is just the tip of the iceberg, but attacks on these systems of overt control can be tangible ways of increasing our freedom, and rejecting the so-called “safety” these systems are supposed to give us. Such attacks on the “outside” are much more powerful when coupled with coordinated resistance by those behind the prison walls.*

*Os Cangaceiros offers an example of how easily-reproducible methods of resistance are powerful. Many of us on the outside have learned lessons from the social struggles of the ‘60s and ‘70s, some of which relied heavily on an urban guerrilla warfare style resistance, with guns, bombs and other highly-specialized methods of attack. Nowadays, many people in struggle choose to use methods anyone can adopt, relying on informal methods of organizing ourselves (such as acting with groups of friends who share our hatred) as compared to formally-organized political parties and hierarchical organizations.*

For more information about these ideas, check out the Oak Root Press zine catalog.



## WRITE TO US

**IF YOU WANT TO RECEIVE A ZINE CATALOG//BE ADDED OR REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST//TELL US WHAT'S GOING ON WHERE YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT!**

**OAK ROOT PRESS  
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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, do not exist.