



WINTER WELLNESS BEHIND BARS

NOV/DEC 2016

Stretches for the Winter Months

THESE STRETCHES HELP NOURISH YOU FOR THE COLD WINTER MONTHS AHEAD, HELPING TO SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM - GENTLY SQUEEZING TOXINS FROM INTERNAL ORGANS AND LOWERING STRESS HORMONES IN THE BODY.

Standing Forward Bend

This stretch lengthens the spine, increases flexibility, and reduces pain in the lower back. It also helps to open the shoulder joints, stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands, and exercises the colon, pancreas, and kidneys.

How to do it: Stand with feet hips-width apart. On an exhale, fold at the waist, bending knees slightly if needed. Clasp opposite elbows and straighten the legs, if possible. Hold for 5 to 10 breath cycles.

WINTER GREETINGS FROM THE OUTSIDE

As we write this issue, fall is still lingering. We hope this issue finds it's way to you, helping you sustain the winter locked up. The time change has it getting darker earlier, which is a difficult adjustment, but we are enjoying the prolonged fall weather. The trees are changing into a firework display of colors and falling to the ground. We are tromping around delighting in the crunching sound of dead leaves, of the possibility of new things to come after the winter months. At night the air feels a little crisper - a reminder to breathe deeply, as winter isn't too far away. It has been two months since the beginning of the prison strike that kicked off this September. Even while this issue is being written, prisoners continue to strike and rebel in many different facilities. We wanted to try to reflect some on what this strike meant, what organizing together between so many rebels on the inside and outside was like, and what we have seen as a result of this strike. The strike fell on the anniversary of the Attica rebellion, which was one of the largest, if not the largest, coordinated prison strike in the history of the American prison system. What initially intrigued us about this strike was the way that it was being organized and talked about. We were drawn to the idea of a leaderless strike organized horizontally - where no one group or person was in charge, but rather where individuals organized according to their needs and desires for freedom. What we witnessed from the outside seemed to be fairly close to that original goal of organizing. We did hear a criticism from one prisoner about the strike, that the organization just solidified power with certain gangs inside prison. While we recognize the way gang structure can help in rebellions both inside and outside of prison walls, we are against organizational structure based on hierarchy - where one person or group has more power and control over others. Not only are we opposed to hierarchy from an ideological stance, but a leaderless movement is much harder to crush, when the oppressors cannot find a head to cut-off.

Another aspect of the strike that felt interesting was the way it felt like a more natural way of coordinating and planning between people on the inside and outside. Instead of prisoners acting and those on the outside reacting and trying to catch up, this strike was planned and talked about by both parties before the act. We hope acts like this can continue to be organized together, to strengthen the bond between those on the inside and outside. So that we can lend strength to each others struggles. We see the struggle against prison and oppression on the inside of prisons as the same struggle against the state and capitalism on the outside. We would like to hear from yall on what you think building a powerful struggle against prisons with those on the outside and inside would look like, or what it would look like for those locked up to participate and engage in struggles happening on the outside.

Another Stretch



Bridge Pose



This pose stretches the neck, the chest, and the spine. It helps to stimulate abdominal organs, improving digestion. It also stimulates the thyroid and lungs and is rejuvenating to tired legs. This posture is calming to the mind and helps to relieve mild depression as well as insomnia.

How to do it: Lying flat on your back, with knees bent, place your feet on the ground. Press into the feet, lifting the hips and the thighs. The head, shoulders, and arms remain on the mat. You can clasp your hands under your body if you want a nice shoulder opener. Hold for 5 to 10 breath cycles or longer.

It was and still is exciting to see how many facilities threw down, and how many people on the outside responded and held demonstrations or attacks in solidarity with the struggle. We heard from some prisoners before the strike that they felt they were unable to participate, because they weren't working, and therefore were unable to go on work strike. The idea of a strike against prisons in our opinion was never limited to work. We see every act of rebellion as a valid form of rebellion, whether that be work strike, sabotage and vandalism, riots, hunger strike or whatever creative measures people can think of. We aren't able to compile a full list of what went down inside and outside but we tried to get some of the more spectacular events, we wish we could include every story from every rebel, and it is very exciting that there isn't actually enough room to tell every story since there were so many.



COUNTDOWN TO APOCALYPSE from *Crimethinc*

We were right about the direction things are heading, but wrong about the timeframe. We thought Clinton would win the election, and would then be discredited by new scandals and the challenges of preserving an increasingly unpopular status quo, producing a reactionary surge like the one that recently toppled Dilma in Brazil. Instead, the scandal broke before the election, with the announcement of further FBI inquiries into emails associated with Clinton. And, as with the Brexit vote, everyone underestimated just how desperate and reactionary the general public has become—at least the ones who still identify with the ruling order enough to vote at all. It's later than you think.

It's significant that the news event that rescued Trump's presidential bid was essentially an intervention by the FBI. This tells us a lot about the era we are entering: it is the security apparatus of the state that will be calling the shots, not the aspects of government that purport to improve the lives of citizens. Capitalism, long stabilized in the so-called First World by the compromises that produced the middle class, will henceforth be imposed by force. The surplus of the 20th century has run out; the velvet glove is coming off the iron fist. Sure, demagogues like Trump and Sanders will continue to promise us the moon every four years or so, but it won't be peace treaties that will preserve the prevailing order—it will be police.

News like this is bound to induce despair, but we must not let this election cause us to lose faith in humanity as a whole. Elections serve to represent us to each other at our worst, distilling the most offensive, cowardly, and servile aspects of the species. Many people who would never personally wrest a mother from her children are capable of endorsing deportation from the privacy of a voting booth, just as most people who eat meat could never work at a slaughterhouse. Were it not for the alienation that characterizes government itself, most of the ugly policies comprising the Trump agenda could never be implemented.

Presidential campaigns are calculated to promote apathy, giving the impression that all the important decisions in the world are out of our hands. That's the point of state politics: to immobilize us outside the halls of power, distrusting each other and ourselves.

Today, even the most law-abiding liberal must realize that we cannot continue to watch from the sidelines. Against the spectacle of powerlessness, we must counterpose our own agency. But to what purpose? Surely not to prop up yet another political campaign. We have to think bigger.

The fundamental problem is that power is structured into such vertical concentrations in the first place. If the President of the United States did not wield such disproportionate influence over the fate of humanity—if the free market did not enable businessmen to accumulate so much leverage over society—then Donald Trump could not be so dangerous, however despicable a person he is.

Those on the Left who have persisted in the naïve belief that the right government could solve the problems generated by global capitalism are partly to blame for this situation. The Democratic Party was foolish to back an establishment candidate at a time when so many people are desperate, angry, and rebellious. In legitimizing the idea that America is or should be great in the first place, Democrats smoothed the way for Trump to promise to make it great once more. Every tax dollar good liberals paid to the government hoping it would care for the poor, sick, elderly, and underprivileged has built the juggernaut that will now roll across their civil liberties. Every law they continue to obey will aid and abet that process. And if the media outlets and politicians that decried Trump as the candidate of the apocalypse accept him now in the name of the democratic process, this only confirms their complicity.

The problem is democracy itself: the form of government that brought Adolf Hitler into office. In response to the polls, we assert that no one should have the right to rule over anyone else. Neither Donald Trump, nor Barack Obama, nor Mother Theresa could ever use such power for good. We have to create horizontal structures and autonomous movements that can meet our needs directly, rather than continuing to feed resources into structures that will be used against us for the benefit of a few.

Let us look for silver linings in this cloud of oncoming tear gas. Perhaps it is for the best that someone like Trump is coming to power now, rather than four years hence. Let the right wing demonstrate that their solutions are just as inadequate as those proposed from the Left. In a time of economic crises, ecological collapse, and spreading war, the state is a hot potato: no one will be able to hold it long. Those who voted for Trump will be disappointed indeed if they actually believe he will bring back the heyday of Fordist capitalism in a globalized world.

Of course, disillusioned Trump voters will not necessarily join our ranks. They are more likely to move further to the right, just as Sanders supporters may simply entrench themselves deeper in futile and antiquated fantasies of 20th century socialism. We should set out to debunk the arguments from both sides, keeping dialogue open with everyone we can while preparing for open conflict with those who are determined to bring about a more totalitarian world.

We must not let the outrage that people feel today shift into a hopelessness that could become the new normal. Only in taking action, however small, can we come into a sense of our collective agency. This is the time to strengthen ties between communities in struggle and those who will be most affected by Trump's policies. This is the time to dispense once and for all with hope for any solutions from above, any brighter future apart from the actions we take on a day-to-day basis in our immediate surroundings. This is the time to learn and practice proper online security—who knows how far the repressive operations of the state will go, or how fast.

There will be new social movements, new uprisings, new fights ahead. This is the time to find each other and prepare to go resolutely forward into them.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN YOUR DESIRES FOR FREEDOM



In response to a call from prisoners of the Free Alabama Movement, dozens of prisons around the nation went on strike in various ways on or around the ninth of September. Prisoners refused to work, to go in from the yard, to eat, and probably many other things that we will never know. It's hard to know exactly how widespread it all was because by their very nature, prisons and their goings on are not given much public knowledge. The bravery of y'all in prison and your refusal inspires those of outside! We see you! In an effort to combat this, we've compiled some of the most notable actions we heard about in relation to the call out.

Texas: Alfred Hughes Unit in Gainsville. Building 8 of the women's prison goes on strike. Prisoners rigged their cell doors to open at the same time and started the strike. Guards in riot gear showed up and blasted tear gas and physically restrained and assaulted several inmates.

South Carolina: 30 prisoners Perry Correctional Center in Greenville force authorities to go on lockdown after they a stage rebellion.

Florida: 400 prisoners at Holmes Correctional the night before, took over the whole prison, causing damage to nearly every dorm. Prisoners put blankets and sheets over the windows of a control center blocking the view of the guards inside. They then proceeded to smash cameras, ransack the dorm and then began tearing away the ceiling and crawling in the attic, possibly trying to escape.

Prisoners in four other Florida prisons, Jackson Correctional, Gulf Correctional, Franklin Correctional and Okaloosa CI, also rose up in various ways.

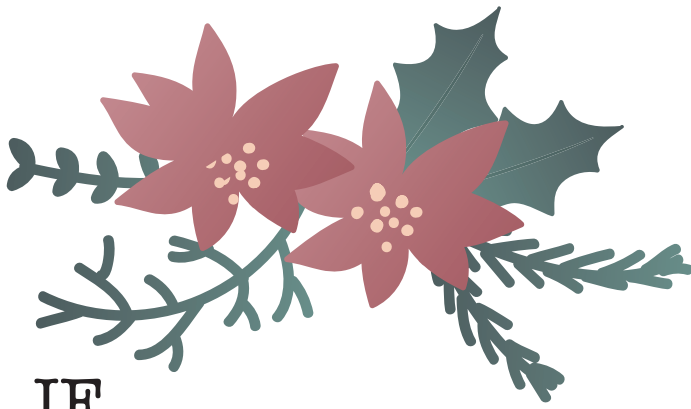
Alabama: All prisoners at Holman Prison refused to report to their prison jobs without incident. With the rising of the sun came an eerie silence as the men at Holman laid on their racks reading or sleeping. Officers are performing all tasks.

Just over a week later, prisoners stage a conference where a peace truce between street organizations (Bloods, Crips, Growth N Development and SB's) is brokered.

Later in the month, prisoners stage more strikes in Holman. Eventually the guards themselves stage a strike too, also demanding respect. Guards, among other demands, express sympathy for the prisoners and the national prison strikes and they refuse to work. The Alabama DOJ is forced to bring in other guards from outside facilities. Guards at Holman threaten to quit, telling one prisoner: "We're tired of them playing games with y'all and our lives. It doesn't make any sense. You be safe Lil Brother."

Michigan: On the morning of the eleventh, 400 prisoners at Kinross Correctional stage a protest inside the prison. Guards had the prisoners back in their cells by after midnight. During the protest, some units were damaged and small fires were set.

California: Women prisoners at the Merced jail stage a hunger strike. Jail goes on lockdown. Block 1 of Merced County Jail had corrections officers lined up to shoot, they threatened to shoot and brought dogs in threatening to unleash them upon detainees. Inmates were pulled out of their cells by force and after searches placed back into their cells.



IF
THE OCEAN
CAN CALM ITSELF
SO CAN YOU.
WE
ARE BOTH
SALT WATER
MIXED
WITH AIR.

- MEDITATION

BY NAYYIRAH WAHEED

The rebellion in Ferguson brought to a head the crisis of police violence and the oppression black, brown and the poor feel under the hands of the police and state. Since then, it has been impossible to close that window, and America has seen a steady rhythm of riots and protests unseen since the sixties and seventies. A new hashtag and riot joined the growing list of names of those killed by police and cities that rose up to resist these conditions.

On the twentieth of September police in Charlotte, NC shot and killed Keith Lamont Scott. People quickly gathered and by that evening, the calm and obedience expected from a protest was shattered as the highway was rushed by hundreds of angry rebels fed up with swallowing the bullshit again and again. Police cars were attacked and goods stolen out of the back of semi-trucks. Some of those goods made it off the highway and into cars while others were piled on I-85 and burned as barricades.

The next day different organizations flooded into Charlotte, calling for calm, or for people to hold respectable and peaceful protests. But by evening the control that those organizations were trying to maintain disappeared.

“On the second night of disorder, it took only thirty minutes to unmask the ethical polarization underpinning the entire Black Lives Matter movement. What is commonly described as one movement is, in reality, at least two. Even this is a simplification. The capillary structure of power has likely produced 5, 10, 20 bases of affective re-aggregation and transformations all under the same slogans. In any case, it is clear that there are forces invested in policy-friendly restructuring around diversity trainings, indictments, body cameras, review boards, etc. These factions – of which the organized BLM “chapters,” the left wing groups, the churches, the student organizations, and the “white allies,” more or less comprise the base of – are the obvious revisionist tendencies in a historical sequence opened by insurrectionary black proletarians, anarchists, communist groups, street gangs and angry working class elements.”

Around 600 marched to a church in downtown Charlotte. As the prayers began, some youth in the crowd began to scream out, “Fuck this Jesus shit”. With that, the division was made between those that wanted to pray for change and those that wanted to act for change, get revenge and destroy what parts they could of a world that wants to destroy them. Stores began to be looted and business attacked, having their widows smashed out. The crowd chased out the police and held the streets. Sadly, later on in the night, a man was shot and killed in the crowd by another person. The crowd did regroup after that and continued to hold space and resist in downtown Charlotte.

“Everyone starts scrambling up a hill towards what we thought was the street, but is actually a light rail station. Riot police charge down the on-ramp towards our highway blockade. Finally we have enough rocks and we launch dozens from the bridge down onto the cops below. One of them must have had good aim cause a few tear gas canisters land up on the bridge. We move on through a hotel, down several flights of stairs and back onto the street. Windows drop everywhere. A 7-11 is being looted. Rocks tossed at bicycle-mounted police miss and smash windows behind them. “Smash that shit, Smash that shit!” someone screams at the top of their lungs as we come over a hill and see a brightly lit Bank of America lobby. The entire block of it is destroyed. Police are more determined to disperse us now and we are a little skittish ourselves. We’ve been holding space well for a few hours but our ability to do this is becoming limited.”

After the two nights of unrest, Charlotte was flooded with non-profit organizations and clergy and organizations all calling for peace and policing the way that people were able to protest and resist. So the nights became calmer, even though the streets still rang with protest chants. As these brief rebellions and riots become more and more common place, we can start to plan what we can do between these times. When the riots are not happening how can we organize and connect with each other so that we are able to make these moments last longer, and move in a direction closer to liberation, or a world without police, prisons and bosses.

BREATHE

Take a comfortable seated position, close your eyes, and breathe, focusing on lengthening the duration of both the inhalation and the exhalation over time.

Letter excerpt from a prisoner in Illinois

"Last week we heard the love outside. No doubt we gave it back. They sent a few police up here and around on other wings to quiet the noise, but it was already said and done. We really appreciate the love. It's always appreciated."

Letter from a prisoner in Illinois

"What's up comrade? It's been crazy since they let me out of the torture chamber. It's like I'm the matrix at times. People are slaves but a lot don't know that they're slaves. And it's dangerous trying to wake some up because a lot these zombie-slaves are informers. At the same time, it's a lot of potential though. It's as are keenly aware of it based on how they have the prison-camp segregated. They don't have the wage-slave workers housed with the non-workers, so it's been very difficult to build consciousness with them. And since the "jobs" are not randomly given to prisoners, I'm a non-worker. So imagine who gets these "jobs". So even though the potential is, tapping into it, and developing it, may take a little while longer. But of course I'm sad because yesterday was the 9th and the crops are not rotting! I'm also angry because some consciously choose to participate in their oppression. There's always tomorrow - so the struggle will continue.

What's up with you? It's the same old same old here. You had some inspiring words for me when I was in solitary confinement - thanks for that. I'm still writing and fighting for my comrades still being tortured there. I miss the spirit of solidarity we had. It was one of the reasons that a lot of us were "released" - to break up that rebellious spirit - to break up the resistance - to undermine the connection and love we were building with white radicals.

I'm still a captive on this human animal factory farm and the crops must still be left to rot."

Letter from a prisoner in Georgia

"Hey comrade. As you know Georgia didn't show up in a huge way for September. A few comrades fasted in solidarity a represented tier program by flooding the dormitories and throwing urine and feces on correctional officers, which in turn got the tier program pepper sprayed, pepper ball gunned and striped celled. It all started Thursday the 8th so they could bring in the 9th on a positive note. In fact those in the tier program are still clashing with the administration and co's while population were given hamburgers and hot dogs for behaving like good little slaves. Yeah, Georgia prisoners in general are broken in all aspects and as a result the revolutionaries suffer. The 9th was truly a disappointment for me as a political prisoner in Georgia. I was getting reports how twenty four states rebelled by laying down to stand up. I and others put forth serious effort to get these slaves to participate but to no avail. Our efforts were in vain. There is only so much a locked down political prisoner can do from behind these steel doors. We needed prisoners take part in the revolt, but sadly no such action. Well I was just base to let you know what's happening here. You take care of yourself. Keep up the good fight.

Letter from a prisoner in Michigan

"Sitting in this 8 x 10 cell, it makes a man wonder if it's worth it. I've heard many of the men yelling, 'I shouldn't of went out there.' It is testing the best of them. They regret making that final call. If they can't come to terms with the decision they made they will be resentful doing time. They have to realize that only losing everything are they free to do everything. It is in losing we gain. One could wonder what kind of math did God create, but it is all about longevity. And from the looks of it, unless it gets overturned, we are going to be here for a while - in Administrative Segregation, Level 5. They read all mail."

MEDITATE

Winter weather can sometimes lead us to feel more low and lethargic. Make some time to meditate. It can help shift the blues. See if you can feel a difference. It's a good idea to sit with your eyes closed for a few minutes whenever feel able to do so.



HANG IN THERE SPRING WILL COME AGAIN

For the last few months on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, the indigenous of the Americas have been courageously been protesting against an oil pipeline that is cutting through sacred land and is set to go under the Missouri river. A leak would contaminate many places down stream. The land where the pipeline is being buried was never ceded to the US government by the tribe, but the US has taken it as theirs, violating numerous treaties.

The Dakota Access Pipeline, being built by Energy Transfer Partner, is set to cost over 3 billion dollars. It would deliver oil that is refined from tar sands in Canada. Tar sands oil extraction is especially more toxic than most oil extraction and the places where the mining happens are very devastated. The importance of the pipeline for the US government is very apparent, especially considering how many police and National Guard have come to protect it from resistance.

The wars in the Afghanistan and Iraq, the volatile situation in many parts of the Middle East have not returned the levels of oil extraction that can keep US as a world superpower for much longer. The idea is that mining oil domestically will be a much more stable option, no need for guns or armies to take over hostile territories because the territory is theoretically under “control.” The situation in Standing Rock mucks this perspective a bit, since the pipeline is actually going through what could be considered another nation. Regardless, the Native people whose land this is do not have the same amount of arms or networks of resistance that more hostile territories might have. This is because of the 500 years of terror and genocide that the federal government has imposed upon them, whether in the form of massacring resistance, dividing and conquering, infiltration, etc. There are Sioux tribal authorities who have sold out their people and all of us by agreeing to this pipeline. This should be a note

that we can never trust those who hold power or seek to represent us no matter how big or small their governments are.

Whether you’re in Syria or North Dakota, there will always be resistance, or at least we hope so! The resistance to DAPL consists of over a 100 First Nations tribes from all across Turtle Island (North America). There are three main camps at this point, Sacred Stone, Red Bud, and Oceti Sakowin. Sacred Stone is on the Standing Rock reservation. Red Bud and the Oceti Sakowin—the largest—is on Federal Land that is owned by the Army Corp of Engineers, but the Sioux have never ceded it to them. The camps are all along the one road, ND1806, the only north/south road out of the area.

Some of us had a chance to make it out there for a few days. We were inspired by amount of people and the generosity that comes from camp life. Food is shared for whomever is hungry, structures are being built, firewood is being gathered and split from all over. Folks are digging in for the long haul. For many, the camp is a place of healing, of coming to together. Cultures that have been decimated now have a large space to come together to pray and act together. Non-natives will probably never be able to understand fully the cultural and spiritual importance of this. It will surely go down as an extremely important event that will inform and influence the next decades of Native resistance and culture.

The camps are place of prayer and coming together, but they are also for many a place of direct action. There have been numerous lock downs and skirmishes with the police. Folks have started different camps. On October 27th, a camp that had been set up in the direct path of the pipeline was evicted by the police and national guard. Barricades were built to slow their attack, but eventually and after 140 arrests, the camp was evicted. This did not stop folks. DAPL vehicles and federal trucks were later set on fire, molotovs were thrown at police, a herd of buffalo was herded towards the police by Cheyenne horsemen. Folks retreated to a bridge and formed a blockade to keep the police away from Oceti Sakowin for the rest of the night.


The act was a large display of power, but ultimately, strategically, it put the resistance in a hard place. Now the only road to where the pipeline is being constructed is blockaded both by burnt out vehicles and police barricades. Our only route to the pipeline is through the hills, which are teeming with police and national guard.

In the weeks to come, we will see what creative ways that we can resist the constriction. Nearly done, the next big thing is that it has to do is go under the Missouri river. This operation will likely take a month to complete and it can’t be interrupted because they will have to start over. The site where they are going to drill under is heavily guarded, surrounded by barbed wire and tall barricades filled with dirt.

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FOR IF DREAMS DIE
LIFE IS LIKE A BROKEN-WINGED BIRD
THAT CANNOT FLY.

HOLD FAST TO DREAMS
FOR WHEN DREAMS GO
LIFE IS A BARREN FIELD
FROZEN WITH SNOW.

LANGSTON HUGHES



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