

**“ WE MUST CHOOSE
LIFE OVER DEATH,
THE CACOPHONY
OF FREEDOM
OVER THE
SILENCE
OF PRISON.”**



PROPOSALS

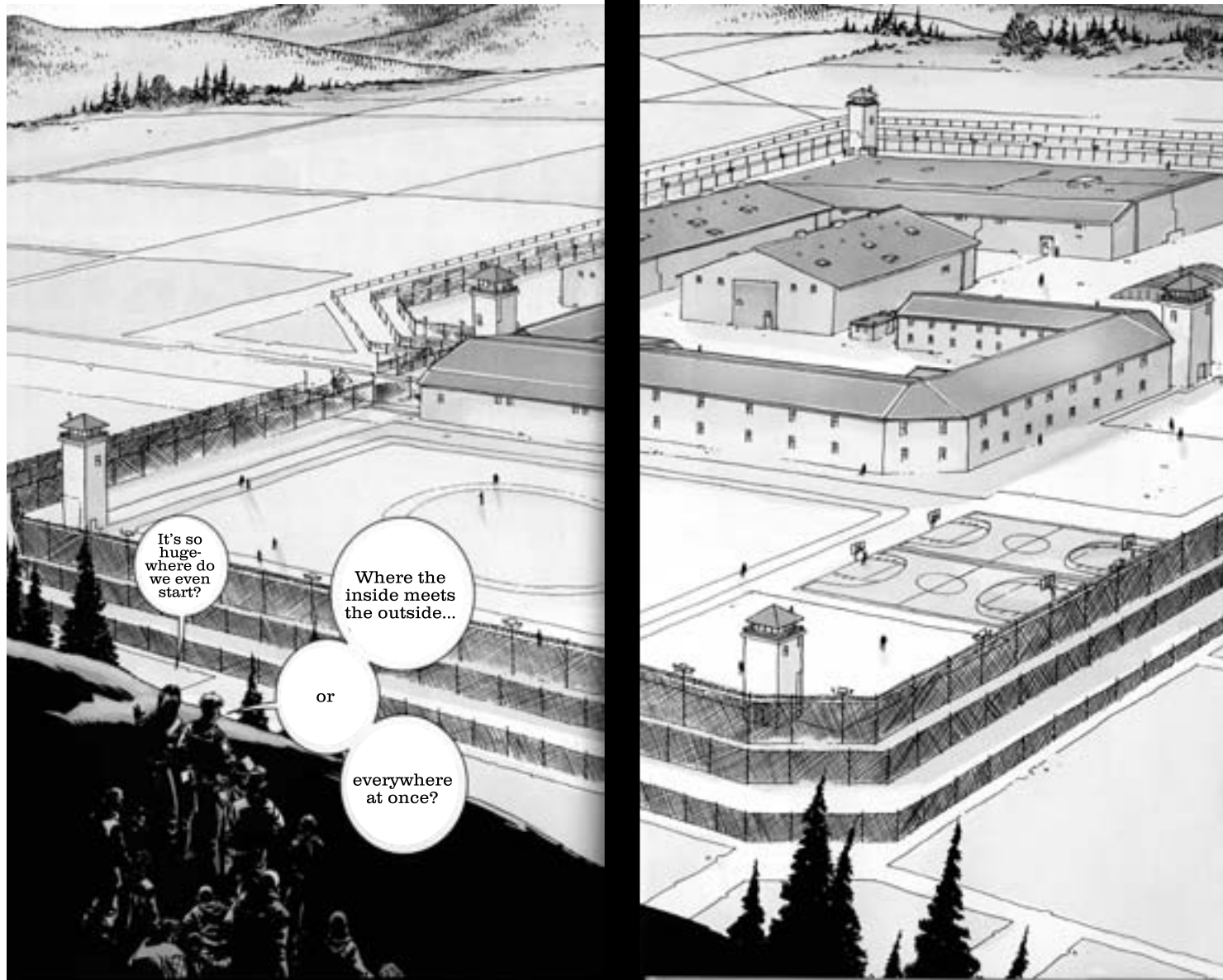
A NORTH CAROLINA PRISONER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2 | MARCH - APRIL 2011



INTRODUCTIONS

RESOURCES



A MONTH HAS PASSED since the first issue of this publication. A lot has changed and a lot has stayed the same. Out here, we've felt the surges of happiness and the deafening silence of defeat. We can only imagine your month has been much of the same.

The response to this publication has been overwhelming in all the ways we've hoped. Your submissions and comments have been well received. If your submission is not in this issue it's not because we disregarded it, but merely because we want to have more conversations about it. We want the editing process to be one that we embark upon together. Please look for our letters to that affect if you haven't already received them.

This month has seen an upswing in resistance to tyranny across the globe. While we are critical of the moments we see as recuperative, there is also great joy in the toppling of dictatorial rule in places where it has been the norm for generations. In seventeen days, the Egyptian people ousted a ruler they found to be unworthy of leading them. They did this through mass demonstrations, rioting and occupations. Instead of waiting for another fixed election, they chose to take the matter to the streets. The outcome of such events led to the installment of a new leader, one that we are just as critical of as the first. But the idea that people came together can over shadow that fact- for a moment.


As we put the final touches on this second

 **Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective**
405 W. Franklin St. Chapel Hill, NC 27516

The prison books collective sends thousands of books of all kinds to prisoners by request, publishes prisoners' writing, and maintains a large collection of radical literature on topics ranging from popular history, feminism, and black power to anarchist theory and writings by political prisoners. Multiple copies can be requested for study groups, etc.

 **North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services**
PO Box 25397 Raleigh, NC 27611

NCPLS is a private non-profit that helps North Carolina prisoners litigate their cases post-conviction, provides general information about legal rights to prisoners, and helps prisoners press civil suits under cases of abuse and rights violations.

 **Support for Kids of Incarcerated Parents (SKIP)**
115-A South Walnut Circle
Greensboro, NC 27409

Provides in-school support groups for children of incarcerated parents, where kids can talk with others who have parents in prison, and can form or strengthen a relationship with that incarcerated parent through weekly letter-writ-

 **National Lawyers' Guild**
132 Nassau St., Ste. 922
New York, NY 10038

A national organization of progressive and radical lawyers active around a wide range of issues which affect prisoners. Their closest chapter is in Birmingham. They publish an excellent Jailhouse Lawyer handbook, which can be requested for free from their national office at the above address.



To be added to or removed from the mailing list, or to submit materials for future issues, write to us at:

(if west of the triangle)
Proposals
PO Box 1267
Asheville, NC
28802

(if east of the triangle)
Proposals
PO Box 325,
Chapel Hill, NC
27514

**WRITE
TO
US.**

different laundry at a nearby mental health facility, anyway.)

The Rebellion Continues

Despite the promises of the State Director, the prisoners' refused to resume their normal routines, stating to the media that they were boycotting all prison activities. Authorities attempted to keep the outside support groups separate from the prisoners, and amassed local police, state troopers, and National Guard outside of the facility. Over the next 48 hours women continued their boycott and rejected all compromises on their demands presented by Director Edwards. Around 7:45 pm on Thursday, several hours after a final meeting with Edwards, a contingency of 25 city police with guns, gas masks, and riot sticks inserted themselves between the support groups and the prison.

Police on the prison grounds then moved in on the prisoners. The women pulled back to the dorms, from which could be heard singing and then shouting. It is to this day unclear exactly what happened next, but after two hours 17 women and 11 guards were brought out on stretchers. Prison authorities claimed that the women's injuries were due to heat exhaustion and "screaming and fighting amongst themselves," which makes no sense given the guards' injuries.

Authorities reacted to the rebellion by transferring 33 "ringleaders" to a medium-security men's facility as punishment, throwing 60 others in solitary, and revoking the "privileges" of 90 more. Prison officials also banned the book *Break de Chains of U\$ Legalized Slavery*, which contained articles, poems, and drawings by women who participated in the 1975 protest. The laundry was eventually closed as promised.

Conclusion

The rebellion at Raleigh Women's Correctional deserves to be placed alongside the dozens of other "more famous" prison rebellions like Attica and the August Rebellion. Women maintained a five-day strike in the face of brutal violence and

successfully defended themselves on multiple occasions. Their struggle is a reminder of the role of negotiations and mediation in such events: State Director Edwards consistently set up mediation, with nothing more than the intent of buying himself time to correctly arrange his pieces on the chessboard of repression.

It is also a reminder of the often duplicitous and recuperative role of outside organizations. Action for Forgotten Women consistently betrayed the interests of those they purported to support, first in encouraging women to peacefully retreat to the gym where they were beaten, and later that day in disarming the women in such

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a way as to buy Edwards time to "negotiate." This does not mean that these groups might also have played a beneficial role at the same time; surely the presence of supporters and media outside the prison walls had the affect of limiting the brutality of the guards, at

least temporarily. Other feminist organizations like the publication *Off Our Backs* were strong supporters of the rebellion, correcting media portrayals and connecting the struggle to a broader understanding of women's oppression.

But the question remains as to how such organizations can avoid the trap of playing a recuperative role and thus fitting into the state's strategy of containment and punishment. We believe this is possible, but that the purpose of such groups must be to deepen and expand these struggles, not deescalate them. These uprisings are limited in large part by the ability of the state to place all its forces at one facility; the solution to this problem lies somewhere in the rebellion's constant communication and expansion to new participants. In place of pacifying rebellion outside groups must therefore help it spread, either by communicating with other prisons, or when possible by helping such rebellion generalize outside prison walls entirely. In any case, outside organizations should remember that our goal is liberty and dignity, not merely the peaceful negotiation of minor demands. We must choose life over death, the cacophony of freedom over the silence of prison.

issue, the people of Libya are being gunned down by their government for voicing the same opposition. They are knowingly engaging in a conflict that will more than likely end their lives. The rule they have been living under since the mid 1960's exploded in a wealth of rebellion. For them, it is better to "die on their feet then live on their knees".

Right here in the US, workers, students and teachers are occupying the buildings and places being used as tools against them. In response to a measure by the state government to limit the ability of public workers to bargain collectively and unionize, people all over the state of Wisconsin



have held massive strikes and occupations. Tens of thousands of people have taken this attack on their ability to organize and responded in kind. The capital has seen a massive occupation with support from all across the country. In Ohio, those under the same threat are beginning to join the fray. Solidarity is pouring in from all across the country. We may not stand one hundred percent behind their goals. We may not believe in "rights" in the same ways they do, but we can share the joy of overcoming fear, of staring down legislators and the police with comrades and friends.

All of these people, all of these hundreds of thousands of people have chosen not to die. They have seen the enemy and understood the measures needed to overcome it. The battles we choose to fight, the issues we choose to rally behind in a moment are not often clear ahead of time. It can take a simple act, the first person willing to stand and say "Enough!" for a revolt to generalize and for the echoes to be heard around the world. And while the things we fight for, the wants and dreams we have for the world we would like to inhabit, will not come about with a new regime or the ability to join a union, it will come with the understanding that the fight is worth it. Choosing not to die sometimes means you lose a lot. It sometimes means you lose the few freedoms you had, or even your life. But that choice makes a great difference.

The months are going to keep passing us by, and we will continue to win and lose, especially when victory is not something measurable or tangible. But we will keep fighting, and this publication is a small token to that fight. It is a beginning and continuance in how we choose to engage in the growing conflict of living in this world, and we hope that you continue to choose to engage with us. Please keep the letters and submissions coming. Your conflicts are an integral part of this much larger attack. We will help where we can, lend solidarity and support to the struggles you choose to embark on. We may not always agree on the method or the demands, but the intensity of our desires will keep us forever off the sidelines.

Here's to a riotous welcome of spring.

Proposals Editing Crew

Cell Phone Use on the Rise in NC Prisons

(reprinted from the mainstream press)

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PRISONS have seen a steady incline of cell phones and smartphones being smuggled in by inmates, who are using these devices to communicate with others on social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook.

The state of North Carolina has a total of 70 prisons, and none of them allow mobile devices on their property. The use of computers and internet access is forbidden as well. Prisons keep inmates from using these devices, which give them access to the outside world, because they can be used to send threatening messages, communicate inappropriately with children, direct drug deals or organize gangs.

Over the course of a five-year period, the number of mobile devices found within prison walls has increased significantly. In 2005, 33 cell phones were confiscated in North Carolina state prisons. In 2010, 634 mobile devices were confiscated.

“Cell phones inside of a prison are definitely a challenge,” said Ricky Anderson, deputy director of prisons. “As technology advances, of course, it presents more of a problem for us.”

All inmates are searched when entering the prison, but it’s difficult for prison guards to always catch every single device as it passes through their doors.

“We have explored technology to fight technology, which would be jamming devices and those sort of things,”

that assist guards in detecting cell phones, but it feels more of these canines are needed. In fact, the state just applied for a grant with the Governor’s Crime Commission in order to receive six more of these trained dogs.

In addition to canines, the state has investigated the use of “cell jamming,” which disables mobile devices by blocking any signals the phone could potentially receive.

“We have explored technology to fight technology, which would be jamming devices and those

sort of things,” said Anderson. “However, we have to work with the Federal Communications Commission.”

The problem with cell jamming is that it would also block communicative signals that may be vital between the prison and law enforcement or emergency dispatch.

The steadily increasing number of mobile devices found in prisons is a growing concern for many, including Attorney General Roy Cooper, who noted that inmates could use such devices for the wrong reasons such as threatening a witness in a trial. Contraband phones were also used to great effect in coordinating the massive six-day prison strike which occurred in Georgia last December.

“With possession of these devices, they can cause a lot of harm behind bars, and it’s something we all have to work together to stop,” said Cooper.

Escaped Llama Attacks Police Car

(reprinted from the mainstream press)

AUTHORITIES IN SHELBY, NORTH CAROLINA said an escaped llama injured a man and attacked a deputy’s car before it was lured back into its pasture.

The Cleveland County Sheriff’s Office said Ronald Griffin drove to a neighbor’s house for a visit Wednesday morning, February 16th, and was attacked by the llama when he got out of his car. The animal belongs to another neighbor, Jack Lail.

“It knocked me down in the wood pile and tried to stomp on me,” Griffin said.

Cleveland County Sheriff Detective Micah Sturgis arrived on the scene and the llama switched its attention to the unmarked patrol car, the sheriff’s office said.

Sturgis and an animal control officer who soon arrived on the scene devised a plan to trap the llama back in its pasture. Sturgis drove his car into the pasture and the animal control officer closed the gate when the llama followed.

Authorities said it was not the first incident involving the llama, named Henry, and Lail will face a \$100 fine if the animal escapes again, the report said. Sturgis said he does not blame the animal for the incident.

“I think he got a little scared and just needed a little direction to get back home,” Sturgis said. “Henry is a good pet.” Griffin was treated in a hospital for minor injuries and released.

Raleigh on the Brink: Prisoners at Womens’ Correctional Center Stage Sit-In, Riot

The history of prisoner resistance and rebellion is often overlooked or denied by historians of all stripes, reliant as they are on official narratives and government reports. The same is doubly true of women’s rebellion on the inside. With the goal of rescuing some of this history, the following is a brief tale of the five-day rebellion staged by hundreds of prisoners at the Womens’ Correctional Center in Raleigh, NC in 1975. This history is largely pulled from a July, 1975 issue of the feminist magazine Off Our Backs.

A Peaceful Sit-In

At 8pm on Sunday, June 15th, 1975, after being ordered to return to their cells from the yard, the prisoners of the Women’s Correctional Center in Raleigh, NC disobeyed orders and began a peaceful sit-in in protest of a wide array of abuses and grievances at the prison. Their rebellion began in the yard, but would escalate and expand over the course of five days, in large part due to the violence of guards, to an outright riot in which women fought and injured dozens of guards and policemen.

According to interviews with prisoners and members of support groups, the initial sit-in was prompted by such issues as the absence of counselors and vocational programs, deplorable medical treatment, a lack of telephone access, the appointment of a new Director, and the sexual assault of women working in the laundry. Women had asked two support groups to be present outside the fence, and these groups, Action for Forgotten Women (AFW) and the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists, both maintained a consistent and growing presence throughout the rebellion.

Both the Deputy Director of Prisons and the active Director Kea met with the women outside, urging them to return inside to the dorms or the

gym. Not wanting to be divided or taken out of sight from their supporters, the women refused, choosing instead to spend the night outside in a circle of blankets and benches.

Bats and Broomsticks

At 5:00 am the next morning, police from the male maximum security section began arriving wearing helmets and carrying 3-1/2 ft riot sticks. The prisoners became nervous, holding wet towels in case of tear gas. Deputy Director Kautsky told them: “This state is run on order. There are beds in the gym. Go there now.” He told them there would be no violence but refused to put it in writing. The women again refused to go to the gym because they were afraid of what would happen away from all witnesses.

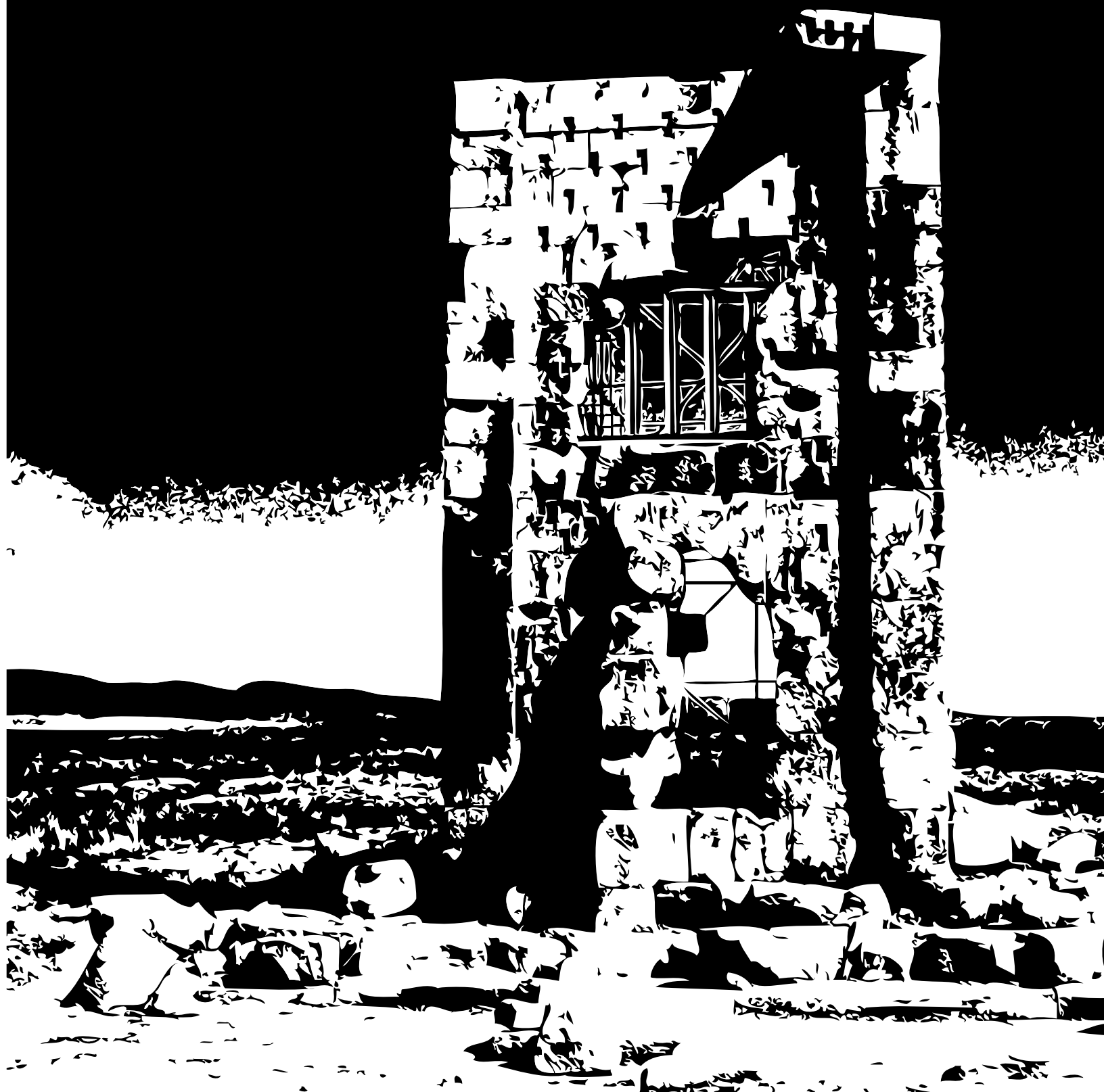
One minute after their refusal Kautzky stepped back and guards advanced on the prisoners from three directions. Women from the outside support groups naively shouted advice to the prisoners: “Lie down. Don’t resist.” Some women walked to the gym, while some resisted and were carried. The latter struggled and screamed. Others tried to help and were beaten. Once inside the gym, sounds of breaking glass, screams and pounding noises could be heard.

After a short period a few women ran out and called, “They’re beating women in there!”, and ran back in. The guards barricaded the door from outside and inside. Minutes later the women broke the door down. They were scared and angry; a few were armed with riot sticks, bats and broomsticks. Despite injuring several prisoners, the guards and police were ultimately forced to retreat under a hail of rocks and other projectiles.

After the guards’ retreat, two women from AFW went inside to talk to the prisoners, once again attempting to deescalate the rebellion by calming them and persuading them to drop their weapons. The efforts of AFW benefited the containment strategy of State Director Ralph Edwards, who used the deescalation to stage “negotiations” with the disarmed prisoners, where he promised to close the laundry in 90 days. (It was slated to be replaced by a

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WE ARE NOT IN THE LEAST AFRAID OF RUINS.



REPORTBACKS

Callers tell the NC DOC: Hands off North Caro- lina Prison Rebels!

IN RESPONSE TO A NATIONAL CALL, people from all over the country phoned in to the NC Division of Prisons and Bertie Correctional Institution on February 23rd to show their solidarity and support for North Carolina prison rebels.

Initially posted on an anarchist website, and then spread virally throughout the country by blogs, emails, and phone calls, the call asked participants to phone, fax, and email the DOC “in solidarity with prison rebels across the state, and in particular those facing repercussions for organizing study

We see these developments as a process that seeks to destabilize prisons and render them ungovernable.

groups and collective actions at Bertie Correctional Institution in Windsor, NC.”

Attention was also drawn to the situation of James Graham, an outspoken anarchist and gang leader active at Bertie who has faced solitary confinement and beatings by guards as a result of his activity.

The call was situated in the context of the historic Georgia prisoners’ strike which occurred last December, as well as the recently successful hunger strike by prisoners involved in the Lucasville prison rebellion. It stated, “Though achieving small victories in this process is encouraging and important, we see these developments and the practices of solidarity we exercise alongside them not as part of a specific campaign around a particular set of grievances or demands, but as a process of growth and resistance that seeks to destabilize prisons and render them increasingly ungovernable.”

It is difficult to know at this time whether or not the call-in day had any immediate effect, but one can only hope that increasing demonstrations of outside support will help create some breathing room for organizing on the inside. In the words of the national call, “The authorities at Bertie feel empowered to beat and isolate rebellious prisoners in part because they think the prisoners have no outside support, and that there will be no consequences; February 23rd is the first step in proving them wrong.”

Georgia Prison Guards Arrested for Retaliatory Abuse Against Striker

ON FEBRUARY 21ST seven Georgia prison guards were arrested for their involvement in the December beating of Terrance Dean, a 29-year-old prisoner in Macon State Prison after a highly publicized prison strike.

Seven different guards were each charged with aggravated battery and violation of oath of office. A coalition of prisoner rights advocates and allies had demanded the GBI investigate the case earlier this year after they heard reports of retaliatory violence against prisoners.

The news was greeted with cautious optimism from prison reform advocates. “This news gives us hope that this is the first step of many toward reform in the Georgia prisons,” said Edward DuBoce, president of the Georgia chapter of the NAACP, one of the organizations that called for the investigation. “But Terrance Dean’s is just one of many abuses.”

According to the prisoners advocates organization Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoner Rights, witnesses said the day after a fact-finding delegation visited Macon, Dean was dragged out of his cell on December 16 and beaten unconscious by Correctional Emergency Response Team guards. The coalition suspected that the beating was a measure of retaliatory abuse for their visit, even though Dean was not a vocal organizer of the massive December prison strike that led to a weeklong lockdown of at least four Georgia prisons. Prisoners told their allies that prison officials shut off the hot water and heating and beat prisoners during the strike.

“What happened to Terrance Dean is not unique by any means,” DuBoce said. “The abuse that he experienced is exactly what prisoners have been complaining about.”

Sending seven more people to prison, even if they are ex-guards, can hardly be seen as a victory in the struggle against prisons. The arrests of these guards can only be seen as a token effort on the part of the state to appear accountable for its own abuses, forced by the strength of the original strike. Ultimately these arrests can only be understood as a way to pacify the strikers and contain their efforts within legal channels, as the state hopes to avoid future unrest in the Georgia DOC system.

ANALYSIS

Identity and Affinity: On Allies and Solidarity in the Struggle Against Prisons

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of anarchist politics many different themes have taken center stage. Often, many will be vying for predominance within the discourse. From the mid 90's on through the early 2000's "identity politics" has been one of those themes. Identity politics refers to arguments that focus on the interests and perspectives of self-identified groups. It is a way to discuss how people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through race, class, sexual orientation and other marginalizing factors.

In response to a country and society where Blacks make up about 12% of the population but nearly 60% of the prison population; where the likelihood of Black males going to prison in their lifetime is 16% compared to 2% of white males; where 1 in 6 women has experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime and where queer youth are routinely harassed, bullied and killed, this emphasis on identity does not and should not come as a surprise. It is the intention of this piece to question the associations that come along with these identities, and how those who do not identify in the predetermined categories are expected to relate to them.

The activist-anarchist milieu in this country has been dealing with its identity since its inception. In an effort to remain tangible and current, anarchists have had the necessity of redefining themselves as quickly as the present generation does. At times this has led to a lack of coherence and continuity in these redefinitions. In lieu of outlining a long history of anarchist "white guilt," out of touch "people of color-led" organizations, and the issues of "accountability" that arise in these circles, let us focus on the issue of "allies".

The term ally can take on varying meanings. Most standard definitions state that an ally is a person who associates or cooperates with another: a supporter. To be allied with another is to be joined by treaty, agreement, or common cause. Amongst radical activists and anarchists the term *ally* has begun to take on a new cultural meaning. In these instances the term ally usually refers to the idea of being in support of or in solidarity with a group or

grouping of people. For example; the term *white ally* refers to a white person working in support of others, generally people of color or people of color-led organizations. While this statement can be generally supported, the issues of identity it raises are genuine.

The term ally has historically referred to at least two or more people or groups creating a pact with each other that is mutually beneficial. There is never just one ally; an actual alliance requires at least two parties and, theoretically, implies a mutual relationship. The new, largely activist use of this term has by contrast created a definition based on a one-way declaration of obedience and support. There has come to be a hierarchical relationship between the ally and the allied. The intentions of creating this relationship are to re-distribute power, to create relationships where those with little from beginning to end are able to control their own

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present and future.

This is not an unworthy goal. But by creating false relationships between what can be perceived as the cultural oppressor and the oppressed we lose some of the force of these alliances. When the bonds they create are binding and without room for critical dialogue we lose the emphasis and potency we strive for. The strength that comes from such an alliance can be weakened by such a stance.

What does being "in solidarity" with people of color mean? What is being an "ally" to women and queer people? These statements do very little to create actual affinity between people, friends, or this broader idea of 'crews.' Affinity is the coming together of people based on mutual interest, whether that be in the process or the outcome of a shared venture. It differs from the idea of ally in that it is not a predetermined idea of who *should* be aligned,

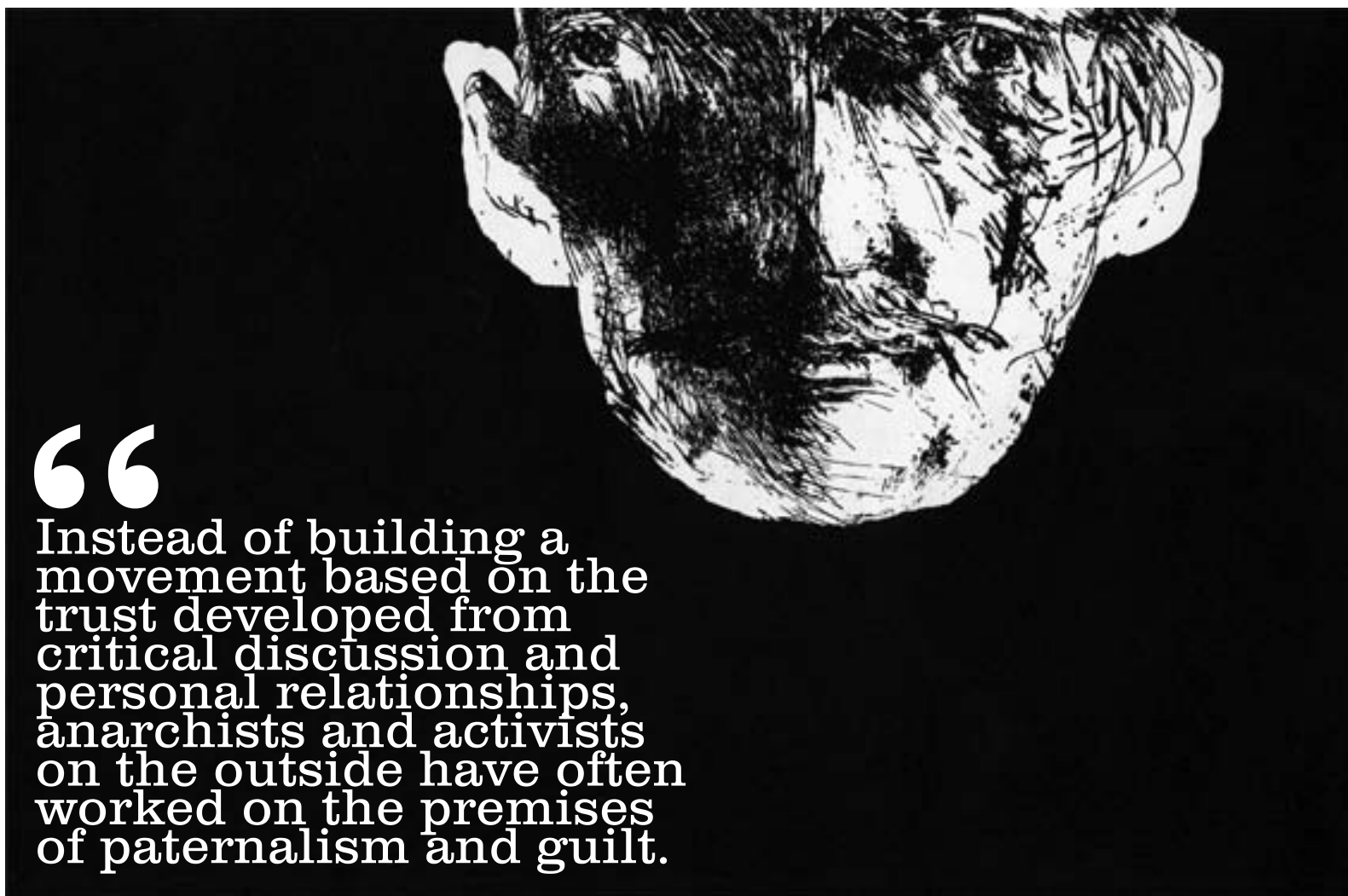
but is instead based on the notion of choosing associations based on common interest and desire. Affinity and crew are terms being used and re-used inside the anarchist dialogue currently critical with the "identity politics" model.

To use prison as an example, if someone were to state that they were an ally to prisoners or even an ally to the anti-prison movement, they risk creating an amorphous and homogenous idea of who constitutes prison rebels and the broader prison population. Such a claim generalizes a multitude of qualified identities in such a way that the individual wants, needs, or ideas found within these broadly categorized groups are not being acknowledged. As a person on the outside, it is nearly impossible for one to actually be in solidarity with 'prisoners' as a category, since there are no universally held concepts or ideas inside of communities of prisoners. In assuming that there may be things inherent to *all* people on the inside, many activists have negated the individual experience or variety of cultures and ideologies that populate said communities.

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This is far too common in the prisoner solidarity movement in which anarchists have played a major role. Well-meaning activists over the years have chosen to forgo their own critiques and desires based on not wanting to offend or further marginalize prisoners. In addition to indefinitely postponing their own goals, this has at times created a chasm between those inside the walls and those moving freely outside them. Instead of building a movement based on the trust developed from critical political and personal relationships, as well as the mutual interest of those involved, anarchists and activists on the outside have often worked on the premises of paternalism and guilt.

In moving away from the idea of the ally and towards the concept of affinity, the hope is that we can identify ourselves as individuals, as singularities that can have an effect on the greater whole. Maybe then we can begin to truly be in solidarity with each other, a solidarity based on the trust and camaraderie we actually feel and on the shared desire to destroy prisons—not on the ideas of guilt, charity, or paternalism that are so often found inside of the activist milieu.



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