

# **Mobilizing for Mumia Abu-Jamal's 66th Birthday in the Midst of COVID-19**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

# RISE UP & RESIST

Celebrate  
Mumia Abu Jamal's  
66th Birthday

**4/23**

Press Conference  
(speakers tbd)

**4/24**

Teach In: US Empire v.  
Political Prisoners

**4/25**

Mumia Libre: An Instagram  
Live Dance Party

**4/26**

Poetry In Motion:  
A 24 hr Reading of the  
Work of Mumia Abu Jamal

#FREEMUMIA

#FREEPOLITICALPRISONERS

#FREEEMALL

#66SITESOFRESISTANCE

[mobilization4mumia.com/actions](http://mobilization4mumia.com/actions)

[bringmumiahome.com](http://bringmumiahome.com)

[freemumia.com](http://freemumia.com)

[commonnotions.org](http://commonnotions.org)

*All of us, every one of us, when we fight, we win. So let us fight together. Never forget the love for each and every one of you for the remarkable work you have done and we have done together, so let's get together. Let's make it happen.*

Message to my supporters from Mumia Abu-Jamal - April 24, 2020

Recorded by Noell Hanrahan from Prison Radio

In March and April, there were several conference calls about the next steps that need to be taken in the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is great concern among all the members of the movement about inmates in all the jails, prisons, detention centers and other correctional institutions like juvenile halls. All correctional institutions are overcrowded with little or no personal hygiene or sanitizing products, and they lack adequate medical care.

It's imperative to obtain the release of all prisoners now. The growing movement has to put maximum pressure on officials to make this release happen.

As explained in a recorded message by Ivan Kilgore, an inmate in the California Department of Corrections, on Prison Radio:

"All it takes is for one person to walk into this environment and you have a crisis on your hands. It is not so much getting it from prisoners, it is getting it from the correctional staff."

When asked, "If you start feeling COVID symptoms, how long would it take for you to see a doctor?" Kilgore responded, "The problem with that amongst prisoners is they would be afraid to report that because it would automatically result in them being isolated in the hole."

Inmates have very few personal hygiene products or other means of sanitizing, don't

have adequate medical care, and, most importantly, they are not able to practice social distancing — which makes jails, prisons and detention centers death traps for prisoners, staff, the surrounding community and connected communities.

The International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Mobilization4Mumia, the San Diego Coalition to Free Mumia and All Political Prisoners, Bring Mumia Home, On a Move, Workers World Party, the Socialist Unity Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, the African People's Socialist Party, Saigon Penn Cop Watch, All of Us or None, Unión del Barrio, Black Lives Matter, the Black Alliance, De-incarcerate Pennsylvania, the American Indian Movement (AIM,), the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee (ILPDC), the Abolitionist Law Collective, Amistad, Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and the Prison Solidarity Committee are some of the many organizations that are involved in the movement.

### **April 15 Twitter storm**

On April 15, there was a social media Twitter storm, emails and phone zaps to Gov. Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania, all day, to get the word out.

This movement alarmed the Pennsylvania Department of Correction officials. One of the supporters participating in the “phone zap” was falsely told that Mumia was hospitalized with COVID-19 symptoms. This scared many supporters, as the message spread around the world, because Mumia’s health makes him at high risk from dying from the virus. This was a cruel thing to do. Many supporters called the DOC demanding to hear from Mumia himself.

On the morning of April 16, Prison Radio released a recorded phone conversation of Mumia with Pam Africa and other members of the Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, where he thanked everyone for checking on him and caring about him and assured everyone that he is okay. Mumia said, “What I need is freedom.”

The coalition put out an emergency press release and organized a news conference on April 16 condemning Pennsylvania DOC's cruel hoax claiming Mumia was hospitalized with COVID-19 symptoms.

Committees met to plan and organize the weekend of events. All of the events were going to be held online, using social media, Zoom, Facebook and YouTube as the media. This type of international mobilization has never been done before. The technology team would be key to all of the events.

The five days of events began April 23 and centered on Mumia Abu-Jamal's 66th birthday, April 24.

The first event was an April 23 news conference. Included were two of the leading organizers, Pam Africa and Santiago Alvarez, a graduate student at University of California-Santa Cruz. Professor Linn Washington, Janine Africa and New York State Assembly member Charles Barron were among the speakers at the news conference and teach-in. The news conference was a success with hundreds of people signing on and participating.

On April 24, a teach-in featured over 20 speakers from across the U.S. and around the world, including political prisoners and former political prisoners. The speakers included Marc Lamont Hill, Fred Hampton Jr., Sekou Odinga, Janet Africa, Rasheed Johnson, Susie Abulhawa and Angela Davis. The Zoom hosts were Johanna Fernandez, Betsey Piette, Sophia Williams, Santiago Alvarez and Michael Africa Jr., son of Mike Africa of the MOVE 9. The teach-in was a success with over five hundred people listening in.

On April 25, there was a virtual dance party with DJs and music.

The finale on April 26, "Poetry in Motion," started at noon, a 24-hour celebration of Mumia. It included Mumia's audio commentaries and slideshows, music and live

videos, and birthday messages from individuals who shared experiences meeting and learning from Mumia. Organizations sent messages of solidarity from all over the world. Also shown was the story of the Move 9 and the Move Organization. Mumia's commentaries covered prisons, sports, the environment, art, history, politics, May Day and other issues.

Mumia is an amazing journalist. His commentaries, along with his books, should be required supplemental reading for high school and college students.

Thank you Mumia for your 39-plus years of journalism. Thank you, Noelle Hanrahan and Prison Radio for recording and posting Mumia's commentaries. Thank you to all the organizers and those who contributed to this amazing five-day celebration of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Speaking truth is power!

Revolutionary birthday greetings, Mumia!

Release Mumia and all political prisoners now!



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# Locked up and locked down

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

April 10 — For nearly a month now, all prisoners in Pennsylvania state prisons — over 40,000 men and women — have been locked down. What does “locked down” mean?

When I was on death row, all of us were locked down, as the saying went, “23 and 1.” Or for 23 hours a day, with one hour for out-of-cell exercise in a cage. After over a decade, it went to 22 and 2.

But this lockdown is occasioned by the coronavirus. Meals in the chow hall, visits with family and friends, religious services, classes, prison jobs — all are offline.

On the rare occasion a prisoner leaves the cell, he or she wears a paper or cloth face mask. Several states, like New Jersey, for example, have followed suit. And then there are county prisons where the sheer overcrowding leads to chaos.

In Philadelphia county prisons, an estimated 18 prisoners have the virus. Then comes Cook County, Ill., where over 400 men have tested positive for Covid-19.

That's a county joint.

For some men and women, being in prison in county jails isn't just something that resembles death row. For them it will be a new death row. For that jail cell will be the place they die.

Mass incarceration is so much a part of U.S. life that the opposite idea — decarceration — begins to sound crazy. But the truth is, it wasn't always this way.

This scourge is the product of neoliberal politics. And if neoliberalism caused this problem, how can it ever solve the problem?

From imprisoned nation, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

*[Listen to Mumia's commentary at PrisonRadio.org.](#)*



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## Coronavirus pandemic: Remove

# **prisoners from these death cells!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

# FREE THEM ALL!



**ALL PEOPLE IN JAILS, PRISONS, SOLITARY CONFINEMENT  
AND MIGRANT DETENTION.**

It appears that the U.S. government — headed by Donald Trump and enabled by Democrats who refuse to seriously check the most egregious actions of this fascist-minded, racist and sexist president — is using the coronavirus crisis to erode any democratic rights under capitalism that haven't already been wiped out by law.

In addition to the economic and health insecurity that Covid-19 is exacerbating for working and poor people, the Department of Justice has already asked Congress to allow indefinite incarceration without trial. And to deny asylum to any immigrant testing positive for the virus — a death threat to many immigrants escaping the chaos produced by the devastation of their countries of origin and the hijacking of their country's political process by Washington and Wall Street.

[According to Politico](#), this request from Attorney General William Barr referred to “any statutes or rules of procedure otherwise affecting pre-arrest, post-arrest, pre-trial, trial, and post-trial procedures in criminal and juvenile proceedings and all civil processes and proceedings.”

This is the exact opposite of what the scientific community, human and civil rights organizations and public defenders are saying is needed to help fight the spread of the virus. Prisons and detention centers are incubators for disease. These institutions have now been transformed into death rows for all incarcerated or detained people.

Prison conditions in the U.S. have always been inhumane, with hygiene facilities and medical care dangerously lacking, encouraging sickness and death. However, these conditions are now far more dangerous — with facilities refusing soap and running water, and no possibility for social distancing during this crisis.

### **Crisis in Cumberland prison**

Calling for solidarity and support, many of those incarcerated at North Branch

Correctional Facility in Cumberland, Md., have contacted activists with the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore regarding conditions within the prison amidst the deadly pandemic.

One prisoner, James Young III, who has been incarcerated at NBCI for almost seven years, has been experiencing severe symptoms typical of confirmed Covid-19 cases for over a week. James suffers from fever, chills and respiratory distress. Correctional officers stationed at the prison have consistently denied James entrance to the prison's infirmary.

Through a friend inside the prison, James communicated: "Yeah man, I haven't been given any medicine or treatment. They won't even let me have soap. They have just been keeping me in my cell as I feel worse and worse."

Attorney and PPA organizer Alec Summerfeld spoke by phone with Terrance Mahogany, who is in the cell next to James. He stated: "I am experiencing the same symptoms as James. It is getting real bad in here. The prison is making sure the guards have masks, soap, hand sanitizer and everything else ... but not us."

Mahogany continued: "They don't care about the inmates. We can't get any treatment. No handwashing stations, no shower access, no nothing. We are just being left in our cells to suffer."

### **'Land of the free': the prisonhouse of nations**

Prisoners and detainees in the U.S. remain isolated and invisible. The inhumane conditions of animals in zoos are covered much more by the corporate media than the conditions of human beings in a country that has, by far, the greatest number of residents behind bars.

As of 2015, over 2 million people are incarcerated. That's nearly 1 percent of the U.S. population. By comparison, China, with a population three times larger than the

U.S., not only holds a much lower percentage of its population as prisoners — less than .2 percent — but the actual number is nearly [650,000 less](#) than in the U.S. [\[1\]](#)

Most pertinent to the dangers of Covid-19 is the overcrowding or occupancy level in U.S. prisons. That rate is also much higher than most countries. U.S. prisoners are crammed into cells at over 100 percent capacity.

On April 7, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the [Oakdale Federal Detention Center](#) in Louisiana after five people died there. The ACLU is demanding that the Federal Bureau of Prisons release prisoners who are at high risk from the virus.

So far, Attorney General Barr has ignored countless requests that he begin depopulating prisons in earnest to prevent the mass killing of prisoners and detainees through neglect during this viral crisis.

This is why Lisa Freeland, federal public defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania and co-chair of the Defender Services Advisory Group to the U.S. courts; David Patton, executive director and attorney in chief of the Federal Defenders of New York; and Jon Sands, federal public defender for the District of Arizona, wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post on April 6 warning Barr of the life-and-death consequences of his continued inaction.

They point out: “The number of Covid-19 cases in the Bureau of Prisons are rising exponentially, at a pace far surpassing the U.S. population at large. On March 20, the bureau’s website reported just two Covid-19-positive inmates and staff; two weeks later, it reported 174 confirmed cases. **That’s an increase of 8,600 percent** [my emphasis – jp], a much steeper rate of increase than has been recorded among the general population. And because testing has been grossly insufficient, these numbers are almost certainly an undercount.”

Refuting the argument that prisoners would be better off staying in prison, they

argue that not only is this a death sentence for the incarcerated, but the ramifications of incubating the virus in this huge population will adversely affect the general population, far more than if the number of prisoners was drastically reduced.

Freeland, Patton and Sands go on to mention the obstruction to releasing prisoners by prosecutors, judges and Barr himself:

“It is too late for the crisis to be entirely averted, but the worst can be prevented if Congress and Attorney General William P. Barr act with urgency. So far, however, Barr and federal prosecutors have opposed even modest efforts to reduce the prison population. In courtrooms across the country, when lawyers seek bail or compassionate release for vulnerable people accused or convicted of nonviolent offenses, federal prosecutors have vigorously opposed the requests — even in cases where people’s sentences are near completion. In nearly every case, prosecutors are making the same argument that Barr advanced in a recent statement: that inmates are safer in prison than they would be at home.

“It is an absurd claim, contradicted by science and fact. The CDC’s guidance is unequivocal: social distancing, hand-washing and cleanliness are key to reducing spread of the coronavirus. Numerous credible public health experts have observed that overcrowded prisons with communal living; shared toilets, showers, and sinks; poor sanitation; and wholly inadequate medical care would allow Covid-19 to sweep through the prison population far more quickly than the general public — with devastating consequences.”

## **Free them all!**

According to public defenders, Barr has the authority to do what is necessary with the additional powers given to him by the passage of the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) in March.

The solution of the problem does not require rocket science or resources that the U.S. lacks. However, this capitalist government and politicians bought and paid for by the monopolies would rather commit mass murder in the prisons than use the trillions of dollars earmarked for the military or to bail out Big Business.

Iran has already released over 85,000 prisoners to save them from the virus. Instead of following Iran's example, the U.S. continues to enforce sanctions that greatly limit the Iranian government's ability to deal with the pandemic. U.S. sanctions apply to Cuba, Zimbabwe, Venezuela and many other countries trying to deal with this crisis. In the case of Cuba, Venezuela and China, these countries are also actively engaged in assisting many other countries in combating this threat to humanity.

There's not much to figure out here. Of course, housing, health care and other facilities to house those who are a danger to themselves or others will have to be provided to those who are released. The U.S. has the resources and ability to do that — if only profits were not priority number one.

The details of care for released prisoners cannot be used as an excuse today to delay or refuse their release, which amounts to practicing genocide against our human family members who are now being further tortured and falling as casualties in the war on working-class, poor and oppressed people here in the belly of the beast.

It will take a united and militant movement to change this deadly direction of inaction.



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# **Maryland prisoners contact community group about denial of proper care amid pandemic**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 28, 2020



Prisoners Solidarity Committee/Peoples Power Assembly

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2020

Contact Person: Attorney Alec Summerfield

Phone: 443-324-8644

Email: asummerfield@protonmail.com

**Maryland prisoners contact community group about denial of proper care amid pandemic**

Baltimore — Multiple individuals currently incarcerated at North Branch Correctional Facility in Cumberland, Md., have contacted activists with the People's

Power Assembly regarding conditions within the prison amidst the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. As the death count increases nationally and the U.S. health care system struggles to deal with the crisis, NBCI prisoners are calling for solidarity and support.

According to these individuals, the conditions they are currently experiencing at NBI are no less than horrific. Accounts detail the complete failure of the Maryland Department of Corrections to adequately test for Covid-19, treat individuals with symptoms, provide proper protective equipment or install handwashing stations. Furthermore, prisoners at NBCI are being denied soap, showers and access to the outdoors.

James Young III has been incarcerated at NBCI for almost 7 years. For the past week, he has been experiencing severe symptoms typical of confirmed Covid-19 cases. James has experienced fever, chills and respiratory distress. Correctional officers stationed at the prison have consistently denied James entrance to the prison's infirmary. Through a friend inside the prison, James communicated, "Yeah man, I haven't been given any medicine or treatment. They won't even let me have soap. They have just been keeping me in my cell as I feel worse and worse."

Terrance Mahogany is a prisoner in the cell next to James. Attorney Alec Summerfield, a PPA organizer, spoke directly to him via phone. He stated, "I am experiencing the same symptoms as James. It is getting real bad in here. The prison is making sure the guards have masks, soap, hand sanitizer and everything else ... but not us." He continued, "They don't care about the inmates. We can't get any treatment. No handwashing stations, no shower access, no nothing. We are just being left in our cells to suffer."

Another prisoner, Eric Tate, called his grandmother, PPA activist the Rev. Annie Chambers, to discuss his condition. Tate told Rev. Annie that he and other members of their family at NBCI had been experiencing symptoms but were nonetheless being

denied any medical care. It seems that prison officials have made no effort to quarantine patients, treat those who are sick or stop the spread of the virus. These reports from inside NBCI come just weeks after the Baltimore Sun reported on the dangers of a [potential Covid-19 outbreak](#) inside Maryland prisons.

Furthermore, family members of prisoners are facing difficulty when trying to obtain information on their incarcerated loved one's condition. Ms. Merry Rogers has a son currently incarcerated at NBCI. When she learned that other inmates were experiencing symptoms, she contacted the prison to ask about her son, Kenneth. Prison officials denied her any information about his medical condition. Ms. Rogers learned that her son had been moved from his usual cell block, but prison officials refused to tell her where or why.

The complete failure of the Maryland Department of Corrections to adequately prepare its facilities or protect its inmates from the deadly ongoing pandemic is an utter disgrace. The conditions at NBCI are unacceptable and nothing less than a violation of basic human rights. The PPA, Rev. Annie Chambers and the families of multiple individuals incarcerated in Maryland prisons demand that the DOC adopt new prevention and treatment practices in its facilities immediately.



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# **Statement from Chelsea Manning's legal team: Ms. Manning is recovering in hospital, scheduled to appear in court Friday**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 28, 2020



Alexandria, Va. — On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, Chelsea Manning attempted to take her own life. She was taken to a hospital and is currently recovering.

Ms. Manning is still scheduled to appear on Friday for a previously-calendared hearing, at which Judge Anthony Trenga will rule on a motion to terminate the civil contempt sanctions stemming from her May, 2019 refusal to give testimony before a grand jury investigating the publication of her 2010 disclosures.

In spite of those sanctions — which have so far included over a year of so-called “coercive” incarceration and nearly half a million dollars in threatened fines — she remains unwavering in her refusal to participate in a secret grand jury process that she sees as highly susceptible to abuse.

Ms. Manning has previously indicated that she will not betray her principles, even at risk of grave harm to herself.

Writing in a 2019 letter to Judge Trenga, Ms. Manning said: "I object to this grand jury ... as an effort to frighten journalists and publishers, who serve a crucial public good. I have had these values since I was a child, and I've had years of confinement to reflect on them. For much of that time, I depended for survival on my values, my decisions, and my conscience. I will not abandon them now."

Her actions today evidence the strength of her convictions, as well as the profound harm she continues to suffer as a result of her 'civil' confinement — a coercive practice that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, recently said violates international law.

Prior to her current incarceration, Ms. Manning served seven years in a military prison under unusually difficult conditions, including eleven months of solitary confinement.

For more information about Chelsea's ongoing legal situation visit: <https://ReleaseChelsea.com>

Read Chelsea's letter to Judge Anthony Trenga [HERE](#)

Read more about the UN Rapporteur on Torture's letter calling for her release [HERE](#)

Those interested can send letters and words of encouragement to Chelsea at the following mailing address:

Chelsea Elizabeth Manning  
A0181426  
William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center  
2001 Mill Road  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Source: [Sparrow](#)



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# **Robert Seth Hayes, ¡Presente!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 28, 2020



**JOIN THE NATIONAL JERICHO MOVEMENT  
TO CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF FREEDOM FIGHTER  
ROBERT SETH HAYES!**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2020, 1PM TO 4PM  
THE PEOPLE'S FORUM  
320 WEST 37TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY**

**SPEAKERS AND CULTURE:  
JIHAD ABDUL MUMIT, NATIONAL JERICHO CHAIR, BPP/BLA  
DANIEL MCGOWAN, CERTAIN DAYS CALENDAR COLLECTIVE  
SPIRITCHILD, REVOLUTIONARY FREEDOM ARTIST  
OTHER SPEAKERS AND CULTURE TBA**

**WE WILL ALSO REMEMBER OTHER FALLEN  
WARRIOR AND CELEBRATE RECENT VICTORIES!**

**CO-SPONSORS  
PROLIBERTAD FREEDOM CAMPAIGN, CALL TO ACTION  
ON PUERTO RICO, MINISTRY OF SOLIDARITY WITH  
THE PEOPLES, NYC FREE PELTIER,  
ADDITIONAL CO-SPONSORS TBA**

Robert Seth Hayes was a freedom fighter who fought for all Black and oppressed people. The Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army member passed away last year on Dec. 21.

Hayes was a grandfather and political prisoner who spent 45 years in New York prisons until he was finally released in July 2018. On March 1, the People's Forum in midtown Manhattan was filled with his comrades, friends and supporters to honor his memory.

The celebration of Hayes' life was called by the National Jericho Movement for Recognition and Amnesty for All U.S. Political Prisoners. Co-sponsors were the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign; Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Holyrood Church Ministry of Solidarity with the Peoples; and NYC Free Peltier.

Claudia de la Cruz, executive director of the People's Forum, welcomed people to the tribute. She reminded the audience that it was the 66th anniversary of when the Puerto Rican liberation fighters Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores Rodríguez and Andres Figueroa Cordero attacked the U.S. House Representatives on March 1, 1954.

Messages were read from political prisoners David Gilbert, Russell Maroon Shoatz and Leonard Peltier. Gilbert, who had been locked up with Hayes, mentioned how Hayes would work in the tiny garden that prisoners were allowed to care for.

Russell Maroon Shoatz has been incarcerated for 48 years, including 22 years in solitary confinement. Shoatz described how Hayes experienced a lot of suffering but was known for his smile.

Anne Lamb, of the NYC Jericho Movement, spoke of how prison authorities "spent 20 years trying to kill Seth." They refused to provide adequate medical care for Hayes, who developed hepatitis C and diabetes as a result. Hayes lived just 17 months after being released.

Shoatz's daughter, Teresa Shoatz, said her father had stage 4 cancer, a condition that could have been prevented by earlier medical testing.

Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement, also wrote in remembrance of Robert Seth Hayes. Often described as the Nelson Mandela of Indigenous people in the U.S., Peltier is beginning his 44th year of imprisonment.

Mandela spent nearly 28 years in apartheid prisons. The jailhouse "democracy" of

the United States has a worse record.

Robert Seth Hayes, Russell Shoatz and Leonard Peltier have spent more than 40 years in jail. So did Janet Africa, Janine Africa and Eddie Africa, who were in the audience. David Gilbert has spent nearly 40 years being locked up.

### **Free them all!**

Pam Hanna, who was a comrade of Hayes' in the Black Panther Party, described what a skilled person he was, including being a good cook. Hayes later conducted cooking classes for his fellow revolutionaries.

Cultural performances were given by Ngoma and SpiritChild. While Ngoma performed "Music for My Soldiers," people shouted out names of political prisoners.

Brother Shep, a Black Panther Party veteran, offered a painting of Robert Seth Hayes. Ksisay Sadiki spoke of her father, Kamau Sadiki, a veteran of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army who has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Paulette D'auteuil of the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee spoke of visiting Leonard Peltier at the federal prison in Coleman, Fla.

A statement was read from the prison branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mourning Robert Seth Hayes. Former political prisoner Daniel McCowan, who had been associated with the Earth Liberation Front, spoke about Hayes. McCowan represented the Certain Days Calendar Collective, which produced a beautiful calendar featuring dates of revolutionary history.

The national chair of the Jericho Movement, Jihad Abdulmumit, stressed the need to reach out to people. He urged the audience to engage in "critical thinking" in how to broaden the struggle to free all political prisoners.

A frequent call during the meeting was “What’s the call? Free them all!” Long live the memory of Robert Seth Hayes!



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## **Family fights to uncover truth behind jail death**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 28, 2020



On Feb. 19, the family of Marlyn Barnes [filed a petition](#) in the Circuit Court for the city of Baltimore requesting the release of photographs and additional information from his autopsy. Barnes, an African American man, [died under suspicious circumstances](#) in the custody of the Harford County Detention Center on April 10, 2019.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) of the state of Maryland conducted an autopsy on April 11, 2019. However, the basic autopsy report was not released for another two months. The OCME has refused to release any information other than the basic report, which contains limited information.

Since August 2019, the Prisoners' Solidarity Committee of the Baltimore Peoples' Power Assembly has worked with the Barnes family to not only obtain the truth surrounding the circumstances of Marlyn's death, but also to bring to light the racism at the core of the criminal justice system. Several protests have been held outside the jail and the Harford County Sheriff's Office.

The struggle to obtain information about Marlyn's death has been a constant uphill battle. From Day One, the sheriff's office has refused to meet with the family or their attorney.

Furthermore, the sheriff moved slowly in releasing the basic autopsy report and the surveillance video from the cell block on the day of Marlyn's death, despite being required to release this information under Maryland's public information act.

Bureaucratic processes like those that the Barnes family has fought for months are designed to alienate working-class people and cover up the actions of the capitalist government and police agencies. What's more, navigating any legal process — no matter how minor — is incredibly expensive.

It's in the interests of the entire working class to fight against the racist criminal justice system and the war being waged on oppressed communities. Exposing cases like that of Marlyn Barnes is a crucial component of this struggle.



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# **Bail is ransom for the poor**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
April 28, 2020



An average of 462,000 people were kept in U.S. jails every night last year because they couldn't afford bail. Their crime was being poor.

The Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, part of the Bill of Rights, demands that "excessive bail shall not be required." Bail is excessive for anyone who can't pay it.

That was the case with Kalief Browder. Unable to afford bail, the Black youth spent three years in New York City's jail complex on Rikers Island, including two years in solitary confinement, before his charges were dropped. Browder later committed suicide on June 6, 2015.

At least 60 percent of the 10.6 million people who were locked up in local jails at any time during 2019 [weren't convicted of anything](#). But they could still have lost their jobs. Their children and families were victimized.

It's a big lie that in the United States everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty. Not being able to afford bail means you can't contact witnesses that could prove your innocence. Any effective legal defense is largely denied.

Being kept in hellholes as Browder was forces many people to confess to lesser charges just to get out of jail. That ain't justice. It's an excuse to keep millions of people from voting.

Until recently, over 20 percent of African American adults were [barred from voting](#) in Florida because of a felony conviction. Many times these "felonies" were simply allegations of cashing checks without sufficient funds.

Sparked by the tragedy of Kalief Browder, a grassroots movement forced the New York State Legislature to pass laws last year that largely did away with cash bail. Police and their supporters have launched a vicious campaign to repeal this necessary legislation.

The racist New York Post — which, like Fox News, is owned by Trump supporter Rupert Murdoch — had four front pages in January alone attacking bail reform.

This is nothing new for the Post, which in 2009 ran a cartoon during Black History Month comparing President Obama to a monkey. For years the Post called the late Black jurist Bruce Wright “turn em’ loose Bruce” for setting low or no bail for defendants.

Another fighter for bail reform was the late judge and congressman, George Crockett Jr. of Michigan. In 1969, Crockett released most of those arrested by Detroit police at a meeting of the Republic of New Africa held at New Bethel Baptist Church.

Police had attacked and shot at people attending the event. The church’s minister, the civil rights activist, the Rev. C.L. Franklin, was the father of Aretha Franklin.

## **Fight back**

Rain didn’t stop hundreds of people from demonstrating at the Brooklyn Criminal Courts building on Feb. 25 to defend bail reform. Among the signs they carried were “Bail hurts the poor” and “Remember Kalief Browder.” Many of the people who marched were legal aid attorneys, members of UAW Local 2325.

Herbert Murray spoke of how he spent 29 years in jail because he couldn’t afford bail. Murray didn’t have adequate legal representation because his attorney didn’t visit him at Rikers Island.

Nefertiti Ankra, a senior community justice attorney at the Legal Aid Society, quoted the words of A. Philip Randolph: “Freedom is never given; it is won” and “Justice is never given; it is exacted.”

Kidnappers demand ransom. Bail is ransom for the poor. The people won’t let bail

reform be rolled back.

*SLL photos: Stephen Millies*



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# **Chicago: Free police torture victim Gerald Reed!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

*Statement from the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, the Chicago Torture Justice Center, and Mamas Activating Movements for Abolition and Solidarity.*

Judge Thomas J. Hennelly has attempted to illegally reverse the order of another judge, Thomas V. Gainer, who vacated the conviction of Gerald Reed and ordered a new trial. Gainer vacated Reed's conviction after overwhelming evidence that his "confession" to a double murder in 1990 was the fruit of horrible torture by police working under Cmdr. Jon Burge, torture so extreme that it broke his thigh bone.

The 100 people packed into Hennelly's courtroom on Friday, Feb. 14, 2020, were stunned when Hennelly announced his decision to send Reed back to prison to serve a life term. They left seething with anger, and in tears. Armanda Shackelford, Reed's mother and a leader of the Chicago Alliance, responded in disbelief. "I never would have thought that this judge would do what he did today," she said.

Frank Chapman, co-chairperson of the Chicago Alliance, declared: "Judge Hennelly's ruling today was unheard of. It was outrageous and a racist insult to Black and Brown communities.

"Gerald Reed has gone through a seemingly endless process started by the Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission. He's been in prison almost 30 years. His evidentiary hearing regarding the torture he suffered at the hands of Jon Burge's minions was conclusive. Judge Gainer vacated his conviction. By what right does Judge Hennelly think he can just undo this order?

"Judge Hennelly had only two options: get on with a new trial or dismiss the case. He arbitrarily conjured up a third option that really doesn't exist: he reversed Judge Gainer's order, sending Reed back to prison to serve a natural life sentence."

Veteran courtroom observers say that Judge Hennelly's action is unprecedented and illegal. A circuit court judge has no authority to reverse the decision of another circuit court judge. Many feel that his action is cause for his removal from the bench. Reed's attorneys are reportedly considering an appeal seeking a writ of mandamus, ordering Hennelly to correct his unlawful decision.

Civil-rights lawyers recall that it was Hennelly who, as a prosecutor, led the conviction and death sentence of Burge torture victim Aaron Patterson. Patterson was spared only because Gov. George Ryan pardoned him and set him free in 2003, at the same time that he emptied death row and declared a moratorium on executions.

"Now is the time for this governor, J.B. Pritzker, to stand up and sign the papers freeing Gerald Reed from the torture he continues to endure in prison. The people will take this demand to his door, and we'll be there until it's done," Chapman declared.

The Chicago Alliance is campaigning for Gov. Pritzker to pardon all survivors of police torture in Illinois. In this case some are also demanding that Chief Judge Timothy Evans intervene.

"This turn of events in the Gerald Reed case just exposes the criminal justice system for what it is: criminal, racist and unjust. Due process means nothing in this system," Chapman added. "The time to end this torture is now, and the governor has the power to do that."

Significantly, Hennelly's boss as a prosecutor was once none other than Robert Milan, the special prosecutor appointed to Reed's case.

# CALL GOVERNOR J.B. PRITZKER



We demand the  
immediate pardon of  
Gerald Reed and all  
police torture survivors.  
J.B. Pritzker,  
DO YOUR JOB!!!

## DEMAND A PARDON FOR GERALD REED!

phone 217-782-6830 or 217-782-6831

chicago office 312-814-2121





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# Chuck Africa goes home

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

For over 40 years, Chuck Sims Africa, member of the famed MOVE 9, veteran of the MOVE confrontation of Aug. 8, 1978, has been imprisoned in state joints across Pennsylvania, serving what is arguably an illegal sentence of 30 to 100 years for third-degree murder. Several days ago, he walked out of prison and went home.

Chuck, the youngest of the MOVE 9, was one of the feistiest members. During the 1980s, he was on the prison boxing team and went around the state trying guys' chins. He was a devastating puncher — in and out of the ring.

When he was at SCI Dallas state penitentiary, a white-shirted officer disrespected him. And Chuck knocked him out cold.

Over the years, he spent time studying history — Black history and world history. He taught what he learned to other prisoners.

Finally, Chuck Sims Africa goes home: the last of the MOVE 9.

From Imprisoned Nation, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

[Listen to Mumia's commentary at Prison Radio.](#)

