PROPOSALS

A NORTH CAROLINA PRISONER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 | FEBRUARY - MARCH 2011

> "I keep taking shapes
> congenial or not
> depends
> on circumstances.
>
> -Marilyn Buck

INTRODUCTIONS

In the past there have been many attempts to bridge the gap dividing organizing inside and outside of prison. While movements outside the prison walls have the ability to experiment and flourish those inside are left isolated and without support; subject to the terrors of repression that those out here rarely have to face.

In the last few years the anarchist movement in the US has been forced to face that repression. Operation Backfire focused on the earth liberation movement, and sent many comrades to prison for 20 plus years. The offensives against the SHAC 7 and the RNC 8 resulted in more than one prison term. Locally the Asheville 11 are facing several cumulativeyears in jail.[1] Our lovers, comrades and friends are increasingly facing the confinement of prison walls. This is not the way we wanted anarchists in the US to remember the other 2.3 million people behind bars, but it is the unfortunate reality.

What you hold in your hand is the first issue of a publication with the aim of bridging some of those chasms. One of the functions of prison is to isolate and separate: the guilty from the innocent, the inside from the outside, the "political" prisoner from the social "inmate." This publication aims to aid prisoners in communicating their opposition to such isolation.

Proposals is a place for critical dialogue, a place to share news and debate ideas and strategy. To us this effort is an appendage of a larger body of conflict and possibility. It is also an experiment, one that may prove a lasting effort or transform shortly into something else entirely. We believe there is strength in the flexibility of experimentation, that movements become stronger through such alchemy.

We should stress that while we find affinity with prisoners' struggles, we do not seek to fill the role of "supporters" or "allies." To us the prison is not an abstraction but a real thing that has stolen our family members, friends, and comrades, a location we may find ourselves in one day. It is a threat that haunts all we do like a storm on the horizon. And the poverty of life under the prison roof does not stop at the prison wall. Whether through policing or wage labor or even just apathy and isolation, "prison" increasingly has come to define much of

1 The SHAC 7 were six people charged with running a website that allegedly coordinated and communicated hundreds of actions against Huntington Life Sciences, a company engaged in brutal animal testing. The RNC 8 were 8 folks charged with a variety of felonies relating to the coordination of anarchist activity during the 2008 Republican National Convention, where dozens of streets were blocked, businesses were vandalized, and police were attacked. The Asheville 11 are eleven people charged with a handful of felonies after a series of businesses were attacked on May 1st in a gentrified area of downtown Asheville.

RESOURCES

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.

WRITE TO US

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

Proposals
PO Box 325,
Chapel Hill, NC
27516

got it on the weekend (which we never get in here).

My comrade F. and I had been asking the pigs why we hadn't received out coats like everyone else. We were in a dilemma because it was our right to exercise, but we didn't have any coats to protect us from the elements. Do we go outside to exercise but risk getting sick, or do we refuse? For about three weeks we had been told there were no coats in the warehouse in our size. Tired of the lies, we decided to do something about it. When it was time for inside exercise, we went, but when it was over we refused to come in. High-ranking guards came down and we told them to suit up because we were fed up. Comrade F. told them all about the coats we were being deprived of. The guard who worked in the warehouse came and talked to us, and when he heard about our coat issue, he told us there were a lot of coats in our size. The results? He personally brought us five coats the next day.

2011: Year of the Rebellion

"United we stand, divided we fall" is not just a phrase. It's something we live by here in the Danger Zone. The movement is P.O.P. (Prisoners Over Pigs). If one prisoner rides for a cause, we back him. There will be no pig brutality without consequences. When prisoners realize who their oppressors are and stop being victims of the "divide and conquer" tactic, things will get done. Our solidarity has produced results every time and will continue to do so. Even though there are passive-minded pig sympathizers here, the revolutionary spirit is stronger than that. As far as the Danger Zone is concerned, 2011 is the year of the rebellion!

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In Solidarity,
A.
Bertie CI
Windsor, NC

everyday life in society. We have our own conflicts and struggles out here, different though related to yours on the inside, and therefore have our own ideas and goals about how such struggles can move forward. We seek a complete break with the carcereal form; we do not want the reform of prison but rather the *end* of prison, in the broadest sense possible. This publication will surely reflect those desires, as it will reflect the goals and strategies of the prisoners who write for it.

This publication is the outgrowth of a number of collective projects, actions, discussions, and personal relationships on both sides of the prison wall, and we hope it can serve to foster more relationships in the future. In that spirit we encourage you to send writings for the next issue, to be printed at the beginning of the month.

We are looking for editorials, communiques, critiques and analyses. Report backs from study groups and organizing initiatives, as well as personal accounts of life inside are welcome. Please give us the group or name you wish pieces to be published under. As an editorial body we will respect everyone's anonymity. Our hope is to create an ongoing dialogue with those submitting works to this publication. The editorial process will include constructive critique on writing styles and content with the intention of building our capacity to articulate our desires. Because of the nature of this publication, we as editors are reserving the right to refuse to print material we find objectionable or that would threaten the continuation of the project. Please be wary of using terminology that prison officials and censors would deem to be "gang related" or could be labeled as a "security threat group" (STG). We can not return unused submissions, so be careful about sending us originals of your work. Our intention is to publish this as close to the first of every month as possible. If your submission does not appear in the following issue, it may still make it in a later issue.

Many understand the prison to be a permanent and inevitable feature of modern life. This publication is printed in the belief that the inevitable is not inevitable, that the way things are will not last. In that spirit, here is the first issue of *Proposals*.

Until every cage is empty,

Proposals Editing Crew

GEORGIA PRISONERS STAGE HISTORIC SIX-DAY STRIKE

On December 9th, thousands of prisoners in eleven different facilities across Georgia began an unprecedented strike in a historic showdown with the Georgia Department of Corrections.

Among many concerns expressed by inmates were not being paid for their labor; being charged excessive fees for basic medical treatments and money transfers; language barriers suffered by Latino inmates; arbitrary, harsh disciplinary practices; too few opportunities for education and self improvement; and unjust parole denials.

The strike, in which prisoners refused to leave their cells to go to work, lasted 6 days. On Wednesday December 14th, prisoners chose to the end their protest on their own terms, in order to communicate, regroup, and have access to facilities like law libraries.

The protest was unprecedented in at least three ways: it was organized by mobile phones that were smuggled into the prisons, it reached across numerous facilities, and it has united prisoners across ethnic and religious lines in an environment where racially-based gangs often fight each other.

Prisoners began planning the strike at the end of the summer, when prison authorities cut the cigarette supply. For the past three months, they have organized largely by word of mouth and text messages.

"They have set aside their differences," said Elaine Brown, a former Black Panther leader and adviser to the prisoners, whose 27- year-old adopted son is incarcerated at Macon State prison.

"You have blacks, Mexicans, whites, Muslims, Christians, Rastafarians, you name it. They are all united and they are conscious that they are united around their common interests."

The strike was total in affected prisons, Ms. Brown said. "If you're at Macon or Smith or Hayes, you're participating in the strike. It's not five people. This isn't rabble-rousing. It's a universal, unified effort on the part of men who have been treated like slaves, whether they are black, white or Latino."

Family and comrades organized solidarity demonstrations outside of prisons and jails around the country. One such protest occurred at Raleigh's Central Prison on December 17th, with anarchists and anti-prison activists banging loudly on drums and holding up banners that read, "Solidarity with All Prison Rebels" and "Free All Prisoners."

Prison officials responded to the strike by cutting off prisoners' heat and water, beating supposed "leaders," and putting many of the affected facilities on lockdown. According to witnesses, one prisoner targeted for his participation in the strike was dragged from his cell in handcuffs and leg irons, removed to the prison gym and beaten unconscious.

On January 6th the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights held a press conference to draw attention to these acts of repression. Ed Dubose, the president of the NAACP of Georgia, declared to media present, "Some inmates have been targeted and others have simply disappeared. We are urging the Department of Corrections and Governor-Elect Nathan Deal to act now to halt these unjust practices and treat these men like human beings."

Though appeals to politicians have done little, the repression has not ended prisoners' organizing or weakened their resolve. After choosing to end their strike, several prisoners warned officials that their struggle was not over. One prisoner interviewed by the press, who identified himself as Mike, said, "We let them know if they didn't meet the requests, the next time it would be pretty bad and it was not going to be inmate on inmate; it would be inmate on administration."

THE FRUITS OF UNITY: NEWS FROM THE FRONT AT BERTIE CI

"United we stand, divided we fall" is a phrase that is constantly used but rarely understood. Here at Bertie Correctional Institution in Windsor, NC, on the Gray Unit in D-Block (a.k.a. "Danger Zone"), we understand that phrase and we put it into practice. Let me note, I'm not talking about the few passive cowards that happen to be dwelling here. They are submissive and are being good little slaves, or rather, "inmates." These despicable individuals are willing to be deprived of rights, disrespected and violated just so they can go to I-Con. They even sympathize with the pigs. Enough on them. The following are situations of unity and the fruit they produced.

Blood in the Cell

There's a brother that lives in the Danger Zone named S. He has an unknown medical condition that causes him to cough and throw up blood. The medical staff at this facility is incompetent to say the least. Prior to this incident, S. had informed and showed evidence to a guard that he had been coughing up blood and that he needed a medical emergency to be called in. He was told to fill out a sick call form, which could take up to a week to be seen by a nurse or even longer by a physician's assistant, and was told that whenever the nurse came around to pass out medication he could have his concerns addressed. A week later, S. told a brother beside him to call the guards because they weren't answering the emergency call button and he was throwing up blood.

A guard finally came in to see what was the problem. This brain dead motherfucker was asking S. what was wrong while looking at him lying on the floor in blood! I got pissed off and told the guard to call a code and get the brother some medical attention. When other brothers realized the severity of the situation, we all began to kick and beat on our cell doors. The results? A code was called and medical personnel rushed down here, along with administrative officials, and S. was taken to get checked out.

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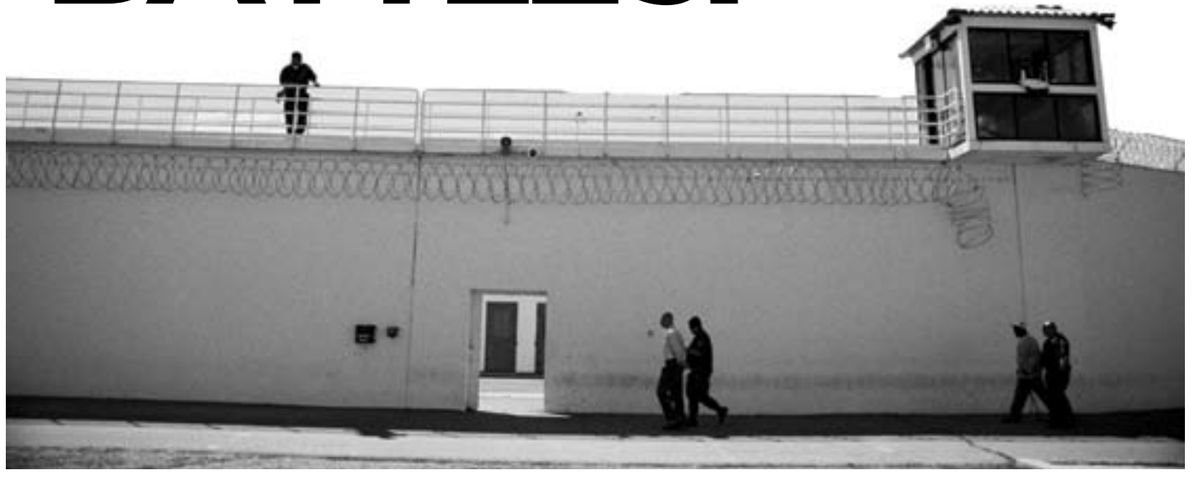
Freezing in the Yard

The Department of Cowards (DOC)/Division of Pigs (DOP) Policy says that we're not to be taken outside for exercise—which is a constitutionally protected right—in certain temperatures and conditions. Since no prisoner challenged it in times past, the policy was never followed. Recently, several brothers from A-Bloc went outside and, realizing they weren't supposed to have been out there in those conditions in the first place (26 degrees with snow falling), they refused to come in until they could speak with a guard who was higher up. The result? Policy is enforced now. Thirty degrees and below and it's inside exercise. Also, during the winter, there's now two days inside, 3 days outside. It alternates week by week.

The brothers in the Danger Zone who refused outside exercise due to the temperature, upon hearing about the policy being violated, wanted their exercise. This one brother in particular named R. had spoken with the higher-up guard, and was told he could get his inside exercise even if he refused outside exercise. The lazy "bottom pigs" contradicted this. So R. told them to strap and put on their "turtle suit" (the pads and other armor they put on when they go in prisoners' cells). They thought they were just going to have him to deal with until the revolutionary-minded made it clear that if they jumped on him, they would jump on us; all of us. It wasn't an idle threat. The two comrades who were already in the inside exercise cages also refused to come out until R. was allowed to get his inside exercise. The result? Not only did R. get his inside exercise, we also

IF YOU KNOW THE ENEMY AND KNOW YOURSELF, YOU NEED NOT FEAR THE RESULT OF A HUNDRED BATTLES.



LUCASVILLE REBELS' HUNGER STRIKE ENDS IN VICTORY

"SO MUCH ENERGY coming is from all over. I'm just trying to hang on and ride the wave," wrote political prisoner Bomani Shakur on Jan. 6, the third day of his hunger strike at Ohio State Penitentiary. Convicted as Keith LaMar, Bomani and two other death-sentenced prisoners started refusing food on January 3 to demand better treatment.

The other two hunger strikers were Siddique Abdullah Hasan and Jason Robb, both prisoner negotiators during the 1993 prisoner rebellion at the prison in Lucasville, Ohio. For their participatory role in the Lucasville rebellion, they received not only the death penalty, but the equivalent of more than 12 years of confinement in the "hole" – solitary confinement stripped of even rudimentary privileges.

Robb has pointed out that other death-row prisoners have been transferred out of the supermax prison or have had their security level relaxed. Along with Namir Abdul Mateen (James Were), these men are the only four prisoners who have been kept relentlessly on OSP's highest security level.

> "I'm aware that the word 'tortured' is a strong word to use, but I know of no other word that more adequately describes what we have been through. We have been put through hell."

Prisoners whose death sentences were for heinous crimes are able to win privileges based on good behavior, but not the death-sentenced Lucasville uprising prisoners. The men's disproportionately brutal treatment demonstrates the fear of prison officials towards the rebellious and organized prisoner.

Bomani also expressed his reasons for protesting the conditions of his confinement in a message of poetic eloquence, stating, "We have undergone penalty on top of penalty, kept from fully participating in our appeals, from touching our friends and families, denied adequate medical treatment, and so many other things that are too numerous to name. In a word, we have been tortured. And, yes, I'm aware that the word 'tortured' is a strong word to use, but I know of no other word that more adequately describes what we have been through. We have been put through hell."

He also stated his demands in a Jan. 3 letter on Facebook to OSP warden David Bobby: "1. Full recreation privileges. 2. Full commissary privileges. 3. Full access to Access SecurePac catalog. 4. Semi-contact visits. 5. Access to computer database so that I can assist in the furtherance of my appeals."

Desire for justice for the hunger strikers is so widespread that emails within the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network have been posted as articles on many websites, including many sites of the Anarchist Black Cross Federation. An "Open Letter" of support had already gained over 1200 signatures in less than a week.

"The response has been overwhelming. I have gotten calls and emails from Detroit, Columbus and Philadelphia about bringing carloads of people to the rally, and calls from Los Angeles, Denver and Washington, D.C., wanting to help," exclaimed Sharon Danann, organizer with the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network. "Ohio Prison Watch and Prison Watch International were posting information as fast as I could provide it to them, and the woman I was working with was in Europe. Updates are going out by Twitter. It feels like a new era in organizing."

On January 15th. the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a large protest was held outside of the Ohio State Penitentiary.

The very next day, prison officials agreed to meet virtually all of the demands set out by the prisoners, and the men decided to end their strike. The full details of the agreement have not yet been released, but the hunger strikers and supporters alike are celebrating it as a victory.

Wrote one supporter after recieving the news, "We need to take some of this energy that was created around the hunger strike to help these men fight for their lives."

REPRESSION

THE REALITY OF THE CAGE: 10 YEARS OF REPRESSION AND REBELLION IN THE USA

ANARCHIST COMMUNITIES are no strangers to repression and imprisonment. Along with hundreds of years of struggle against oppression and domination, there is an equal history of police brutality, torture and prison. Unfortunately the nature of the anarchist subculture today does not allow it to necessarily remember this history. 'Generationally' speaking, anarchists tend to work in ten-year spurts with groups all too often failing to pass vital information on to the next generation.

In an attempt to rectify that situation, to explore what affinities may exist between anarchists on the outside and prisoners on the inside, and to give a background on the inspiration behind this publication, we present this broad overview of state repression against anarchist or anarchist-affiliated movements in the US in the past ten years. For governments and revolutionaries alike, to be anarchist has always meant to be criminal in some inherent sense. Since our highly visible reemergence on the political scene of the 21st century in particular, the state has made increased use of proactive surveillance and conspiracy charges to criminalize not just rebellious activity but our very identities and associations as anarchists.

A Brief Overview

Though anarchists were highly involved in the massive disruption of economic trade talks in Seattle, 1999, as well a series of later anti-capitalist demonstrations that both popularized anarchist organizational forms and saw thousands of people participating in blockades, street-fighting, and property destruction, few of these demonstrations resulted in serious charges or significant prison time. Outside of the arrest and conviction of Rob Los Ricos, who was sentenced to seven years for throwing projectiles at police in a riot in Oregon, police had little success in sticking heavy charges on this generation of militants.

Aside from this "anti-globalization" movement, there have been several cases over the last decade that have stood out amongst the many charges filed against anarchists and other anti-authoritarians. The "SHAC 7," six individuals and an organization ("Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty USA") indicted in New Jersey on charges of animal enterprise terrorism under the "Animal Enterprise Protection Act"(AETA) on May 26, 2004, were one of those cases.

More or less targeted for running a website advocating direct action in defense of animal life, the SHAC 7 were convicted on March 2, 2006. Their conviction probably emboldened law enforcement agencies to utilize conspiracy charges to target radicals nationwide, especially in cases in which simple criminal charges could not be pressed convincingly or did not appear to offer enough of a deterrent.

Just before the SHAC 7 were convicted, a massive crackdown dubbed "Operation Backfire" occurred, targeting eco-defense activists. The major events in that case occurred in December of 2005 and January 2006. With assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the FBI indicted six women and seven men on a total of 65 charges, including arson, conspiracy, use of destructive devices, and destruction of an energy facility. Currently several of the indicted sit in jail cells around this country. Labeled "terrorists" and put in extremely restrictive prisons, these individuals refused to cooperate with authorities and snitch on their co-defendants. Many other indicted co-conspirators were also named, but unlike their former comrades and friends, accepted plea deals in return for informing to the government.

The state has always defined us as de facto criminals; we can only hope to find affinity with as many others as possible who also face this reality, to bridge the gaps of communication, culture and desire.

Continued fall out from Operation Backfire saw the January 2006 arrest of three more individuals in January 2006. Eric McDavid, Zachary Jenson, and Lauren Weiner were arrested in Auburn, California for conspiring to damage facilities "by explosive or fire." Jenson and Weiner took cooperating plea bargains, selling out McDavid, who was convicted on all counts September 27, 2007 and was sentenced in May 2008 to nearly 20 years in prison.

The McDavid case is notable because of the role of a paid informant, "Anna," who essentially entrapped the defendants by utilizing money and flirtation to lure them into discussions about illegal activity. This type of entrapment will be used against radical communities for generations to come.

Another result of FBI infiltration and informants was the case of environmental activist and anarchist Marie Mason. In March 2008, Marie Mason, Frank Ambrose, and two others were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit arson; Mason and Ambrose faced additional charges related to acts of property destruction that occurred in 1999 and 2000. It came out that Ambrose, Mason's ex-husband, had been assisting the FBI extensively in investigating environmental organizing since 2007; despite this, his plea bargain resulted in a nine year sentence, two years more than the prosecutor had requested. The other two defendants also negotiated cooperating deals with the Justice Department, agreeing to help in the investigation of Mason. Mason was threatened with a life sentence before accepting a plea bargain in September 2008, in which she also admitted involvement in 12 other acts totaling more than $2.5 million of property damage. Mason was sentenced on February 5, 2009 in federal court in Lansing, Michigan. She received almost 22 years, the longest sentence of any Operation Backfire conviction.

In what became one of the most publicized support campaigns of the last decade, as well as the first use of criminal charges under the 2002 Minnesota version of the Federal Patriot Act, Ramsey County prosecutors charged eight alleged organizers of anarchist protests against the 2008 Republican National Convention with Conspiracy to Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism. The RNC 8 faced up to seven and a half years in prison under the terrorism enhancement associated with the charge, which allows for a 50% increase in the maximum penalty. They later received more charges—conspiracy to commit property damage, conspiracy to commit property damage in furtherance of terrorism, and conspiracy to riot.

In early April 2009, after many months of letter-writing, protests, and public harassment of politicians and prosecutors involved in the case, the terrorism enhancement charges were dropped. Then, just several weeks before the trial was set to begin, the prosecution dropped charges entirely on three of the defendants. Another defendant pled to a gross misdemeanor and received a 91 day jail sentence, and the final three plead to gross misdemeanors and received probation and fines.

Locally, anarchists have been hit with a slue of conspiracy and conspiracy related charges. Eleven people were arrested on May 1, 2010 in Asheville, NC, accused of doing $20,000 worth of damage to businesses in a highly gentrified tourist area of downtown. Each was charged with 3 felonies (felony riot, felony conspiracy to riot, felony damage to property) and 10 misdemeanors. Initially set at $10,000, bail was ratcheted up to $65,000 apiece as the authorities implemented anti-anarchist scare tactics in the media and court system. Their trial dates have yet to be set, but will more than likely happen this spring.

What the Future Holds

These are only a few of the many hundreds of arrests, cases and trials faced by US anarchists over these past ten years. The use of conspiracy and racketeering charges in general, and the cases of the SHAC 7, RNC 8, and Asheville 11 in particular, demonstrate the state's expansion from seeking to arrest those allegedly guilty of a *specific activity* (assaulting the police, liberating an arrested comrade, sabotaging property, etc.) to criminalizing *our very associations with each other*.

One could interpret this expansion as prompted by government agencies' generally clumsy inability to understand and weaken the horizontal and "leaderless" organizational structures used by anarchists: if the organization cannot be broken down piece by piece, why not vaguely criminalize such associations altogether? Of course, this strategy is only made possible by a general expansion of the state into everday life, itself a result of the retreat of non-anarchist social movements and the Left from any kind of radical or revolutionary activity.

Regardless of the specific logic of the moment underlying this criminalization, these cases have forced a new generation of anarchists and rebels to face the reality of prison head on. Despite the obvious drawbacks of having friends and comrades stolen from our communities for years at a time, this repression has also had its benefits, demonstrated both with attempts to increase the intergenerational dialogue with those still held in the American gulags, as well as in the growing commitment of some anarchists in engaging with and enabling broader rebellion behind prison walls.

The state has always defined us as de facto criminals; we can only hope to find affinity with as many others as possible who also face this reality, to bridge the gaps of communication, culture and desire. We may feel this affinity in many different ways and our approaches may be vastly different, but our resolve must be total. The nature of our lives and the structures we live under force us to realize prison, and to respond to it in kind.