

the BLACK ROSE

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Occupy Shuts Down West Coast Ports

WEST COAST - On December 12th, more than 1,000 Occupy Wall Street protesters blocked cargo trucks at busy US west coast ports, forcing some shipping terminals in Oakland, California, Portland, Oregon, and Washington state to halt operations.

While the protests on Monday attracted fewer people than the 10,000 who turned out during the November 2nd general strike to shut down Oakland's port, organizers declared victory and promised more demonstrations to come.



Hundreds of protesters shut down the port during the Oakland general strike.

"The truckers are still here but there's nobody here to unload their stuff," said protest organizer and hip hop MC Boots Riley. "We shut down the Port of Oakland for the daytime shift and we're coming back in the evening. Mission accomplished."

Picket lines and physical blockades were erected in Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, Tacoma, San Diego, and Portland, to name just a few. In Olympia, WA, a police station had its locks glued shut and was spray painted with slogans in solidarity with the strike.

The goal of the direct action was to demonstrate solidarity with longshoremen struggling against the companies EGT and Goldman Sachs in Longview, WA, as well as a general display of coordinated power against the corporations that profit from the ports.

The protest faced criticism from International Longshoremen Workers' Union leaders for bypassing the union's decision-making process, though other rank-and-file workers expressed their support for the action and refused to cross picket lines.

CA Prisoners Continue Struggle Against Solitary

CALIFORNIA - Despite the widespread hunger strikes across California protesting the conditions of long-term solitary confinement in the California prison system, there have yet to be any indications of substantive change on the horizon.

On several occasions the State has promised to make changes, causing strikers to end their protest, but the administration have not held up their end of the bargain.

Since the end of the most recent hunger strike in October, at least three hunger strikers have committed suicide—two in Pelican Bay State Prison's Security Housing and another at Calipatria State Prison's Ad-

ministrative Segregation Unit. The circumstances of these suicides was suspect, their occurrence suppressed by the administration.

There have also been reports of hunger striker leaders at Pelican Bay State Prison facing disciplinary action for their participation in the strikes as well, and the State has refused to acknowledge any complicity in the suicides.

In a letter recently released by some of the leaders of the original hunger strike at Pelican Bay, which ultimately spread to over 18,000 participants and supporters, the prisoners declare their solidarity with, "all similarly situated prisoners subject to the continuing torturous conditions of confine-

ment in these barbaric SHU & Ad/Seg units across this country and around the world," and pledge to continue their struggle into the new year.

Georgia Prison Strike "Supporters" Sell Out

GEORGIA - A year ago last month, thousands of black, white and brown inmates in a dozen Georgia prisons staged a brief but broad, coordinated labor strike. They put forward a set of simple and basic demands — wages for work, decent food and medical care, access to educational and self-improvement programs, fairness and transparency in the way the state handles grievances, inmate funds and release decisions, and more opportunities to connect with their families and loved ones.

A group called Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoner Rights was formed on the outside with the purpose of monitoring the situation on the inside and, theoretically, helping to prevent reprisals against prisoners by presenting consistent reports of conditions.

None of these things happened. The short-lived coalition quickly struck a deal with the newly elected governor, who had proposed a series of "reform" measures oriented not towards improving prison conditions or changing the "justice" system, but towards making prisons cheaper for Georgia. One aspect of these "reforms" was a series of misnamed but profitable "re-entry" programs.

The Governor reportedly made a deal with some leading figures in the Coalition to Respect Prisoner Rights, who bolted the coalition with the expectation that if they help line up black Democrats behind the white Republican governor's "criminal justice reform" proposals, they'd get some of the state's new "re-entry" money. A senior

national civil rights leader quietly flew in and out of Atlanta the same day to quietly meet with Governor Deal about his deal. So the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoner Rights withered and died.

And so, a year out from the December 2010 prison strike, it is clear that activists outside the walls have largely failed to honor their commitment to those inside the walls. In the past year, not much has changed. Scores of prisoners alleged to be strike leaders were punitively transferred and locked down in the wake of the strike. Dozens more who were not strike leaders were savagely beaten, as exemplary reprisals for the strike, and denied medical attention afterward.

It is clear that prisoners and their families in Georgia continue to struggle against the prison system. It is also clear that self-important activist leaders, would-be politicians, and political parties have much to drain from this movement, but little to offer.

Prosecutor Drops Death Penalty Effort Against Mumia

PHILADELPHIA — Prosecutors on Wednesday abandoned their 30-year push to execute convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther whose claim that he was the victim of a racist legal system made him an international cause celebre.

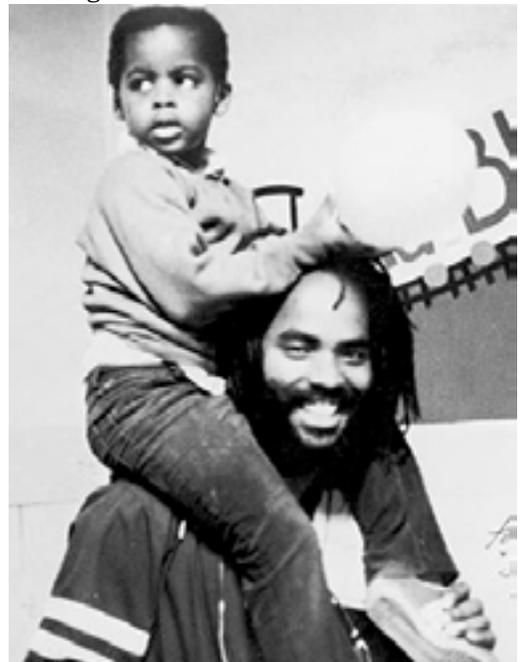
Flanked by police Officer Daniel Faulkner's widow, Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams announced his decision two days short of the 30th anniversary of the white patrolman's killing.

He said that continuing to seek the death penalty could lead to "an unknowable number of years" of appeals, and that some witnesses have died or are unavailable after nearly three decades.

Over the years, Abu-Jamal challenged the predominantly white makeup of the jury, the instructions given to the jurors and the accounts of eyewitnesses. He also complained that his lawyer was ineffective, that the judge was racist and that another man confessed to the crime.

His writings and radio broadcasts from death row put him at the center of an international debate over capital punishment and made him the subject of books and movies. The one-time journalist's own 1995 book, "Live From Death Row," depicts prison life and calls the justice system racist.

He garnered worldwide support from the "Free Mumia" movement, with hundreds of vocal supporters and death-penalty opponents regularly turning out for court hearings in his case.



Mumia with his son, before his trial.

SUBMIT YOUR NEWS!

Prisoners are a large source of the news and updates for this bulletin. If you have any news from your facility, including reportbacks, relevant personal accounts, communiqués, or proposals, send them to: News Bulletin, PO Box 754 Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

NORTH CAROLINA

Durham Joins Cities Around North America in New Year's Eve Demo

DURHAM - At 8pm on December 31st, Durham joined a long list of dozens (and perhaps hundreds?) of towns and cities around the world to protest prisons and jails on New Year's Eve. Done to raise prisoners' spirits and dedicate the year toward fighting the State, folks screamed at the walls, banged on drums, chanted "Our Passion for Freedom is Stronger than their Prisons", screamed "Happy New Year," and banged on street signs.



Anti-Prison activists demonstrate at Durham Jail, New Years.

Police showed up soon, but were more or less hands off. Prisoners reacted by banging on windows and flashing lighters in unison with the music from their cells. At the end of the demo, the crowd lied down in the street to spell a giant, human "HAPPY NEW YR" with their bodies, so as to be visible from the top floors of the 7 story building.

Similar demonstrations happened around the US and in countries as far away as Australia, Germany, and Finland. In Pittsburgh, protesters smashed out several of the windows of the jail before quickly leaving; in Oakland, fireworks were set off, a flag burned, and a police station attacked on a march leaving the jail.

Central Prison Warden Steps Down After Scathing Report

RALEIGH - On November 1st, Central Prison warden Gerald Branker stepped down in response to an earlier review that found that inmates with serious mental disorders were often isolated for weeks, sometimes nude, in cells puddled with human waste.

The scathing June 2011 report on conditions inside the prison's mental unit was first made public on Monday by The Associated Press. Gov. Bev Perdue later called the report's contents "unacceptable."

DOC administrators had previously denied anyone was fired or disciplined over the internal review. Branker had worked at the Raleigh prison since 1979, starting as a correctional officer.

Occupy Durham Marches to Remember Oscar Grant, Oppose Police Violence

DURHAM - On Sunday, January 1, 2012, Occupy Durham hosted solidarity march and speak out in remembrance of Oscar Grant and all victims of police brutality. A small group marched through downtown, denouncing police brutality and harassment and state repression.

The event coincided with others around the country and marked the third anniversary of Oscar Grant's murder at the hands of Oakland, California transit police officer Johannes Mehserles, who was convicted of involuntary manslaughter, then served seven months in prison. His murder resulted in a massive outpouring of rage towards the police in Oakland, including two riots.

The plaza where Occupy Oakland set up an encampment was renamed Oscar Grant Plaza and has been a frequently contested site between protesters and the political leaders of Oakland.

This resistance has reverberated in other cities, including Durham. Other cities throughout the country had similar events this day to commemorate the struggle as well. As the event's press release states, "The Oakland police department's treatment of Oscar Grant, who was certainly part of the so-called 99%, is not an aberration in the United States of America. More and more people are on or headed toward the scrap heap of our society, but Oscar Grant was not sent to the scrap heap—he was sent to the morgue."

Prisoners Hunger Strike at Foothills Prison

MORGANTON - Several prisoners began a small hunger strike on December 1st in response to several grievances. They released the following letter and demands:

"We feel these are modest demands and will not quit until they are met. They include but are not limited to:

1. We demand the removal of the mesh covering segregation windows, which restricts long-distance vision and causes sensory deprivation.
2. We demand to be free to recreate on exercise hour without full restraints. Exercising in full restraints is physically impossible and inhumane.
3. We demand to have our desk, metal seating bench, and book shelves put back in our rooms.
4. We demand adequate food and full portions on our food trays, which includes nutritional meals.
5. We need more psychologists for prisoners. The facility only has two psychologists for a 712-bed prison.
6. We demand for all prisoners on control status (I-Con, M-Con, and H-Con) that are not indigent to be able to purchase paper and envelopes from the canteen.
7. We demand for all segregation prisoners to be able to purchase any type of pharmaceutical item from the canteen as stated in policy, including for example vitamins, tylenol, muscle relaxer cream, foot fungus powders, etc.
8. We demand adequate and equal cleaning supplies on clean-up days as regular population, including brushes and toilet bowl cleaner.
9. We demand shower mats outside of showers to prevent slipping and injuries.

These are just the demands agreed upon by the comrades. We would greatly appreciate any assistance you can offer on short notice. We will all stand strong against enemy forces and be victorious in this small problem surrounding the entire prison-industrial complex."

People on the outside called in to the administration to express their support, and the prisoners ended the strike after several days, when several of their demands were met. The protest at Foothills Prison is one of several small hunger strikes that have occurred in the last 6 months in North Carolina facilities, including others at Polk, Bertie, and Lanesboro Correctional Institutions.

Residents March on Town Hall in Response to Police Report

CHAPEL HILL - On Monday, January 9th, the first Chapel Hill Town Council meeting of the year was greeted with a fresh wave of anger and controversy over the violent police eviction of last year's Yates Building occupation. The large, empty building, owned by a wealthy absentee landlord, was occupied for about 24 hours with the intent of turning it into an anarchist community center.

The protest was spurred by a Town review of the armed eviction, which justified the action and refused to acknowledge the massive public outrage towards the police conduct. Since the eviction at least 4 protests against the police and the Mayor have taken place.

Approximately 40 protesters marched from the site of Occupy Chapel Hill, at the Post Office on Franklin St., taking up two lanes of traffic, banging on drums, and waving black flags. One banner, in reference to what police claim to have found inside the occupied building, read, "We are all flammable materials, our hearts are bags of rocks."

When the group reached Town Hall, people surrounded the windows of the meeting room and plastered them with taped-up banners and signs denouncing the armed police raid. Protesters yelled speeches against the police and capitalism, and called the police advisory committee "a farce."

Others filled the room itself, waiting their turn to rail against the council members and mayor. A protest of the police advisory committee's meeting on January 11th was also announced. Ironically, despite being appointed by the Town Council, at its meeting this committee itself called for an independent review of the eviction, claiming that the review released by the town was biased.



Hundreds of residents march against police in Chapel Hill.