

## IWOC OAKLAND'S POINTS OF UNITY

Our work, as an outside chapter, is to support prisoners in taking and building their own power. Prisoners set the agenda for their own pursuit of liberation.

We offer critical support, not unconditional servitude. We retain our own principles, judgment, and decision-making power. This is mutual political development. We are comrades in a struggle that grows and evolves on both sides of the wall.

We're up-front and clear with prisoners and the public about our politics and goals.

We offer immediate material support and solidarity, not just symbolic actions and statements.

We build and maintain intentional accountability relationships with other groups and individuals, to give us perspective, critique, & feedback about ourselves and our work.

We don't allow our work to be hijacked by people who want to use us as a platform for their own gain or other purposes.

We follow through on our commitments. Promises get kept or we don't make them. There's skin in the game and people are depending on us.

We advocate prison abolition, not reform. If prisoners are making demands to reform the policies at their institutions, or for legislative reform that could bring them material relief, we may support those demands – but not at the expense of pursuing abolition in the long term.

We oppose white supremacy. We consider incarceration to be, among many other things, an expression of white supremacy. We acknowledge that racism has its own nature and consequences, independent of class oppression (though often operating in conjunction with it). We challenge our white members to confront how they benefit from and exemplify the racist patterns in our society, and to fight these tendencies continually.

We reject labels given by the state such as "guilty," "criminal," or "gang member." We do not choose who we work with based on these or other simple moralistic designations. We may refuse to work with prisoners who espouse ideologies opposed to these points of unity (such as white supremacists), or who will jeopardize other prisoners' willingness to work with us (such as child molesters), but such decisions are made in the context of ongoing critical discussion.

We are organized in a mostly horizontal fashion, with three levels of membership distinguished by extent of commitment, accountability, and actual work done. We make decisions collectively and discourage authoritarian behaviors.

### *Repairing My Identity*

#### BOY

I am born  
I am labeled  
I am taught  
How to act.

#### MAN

I try to conform.  
I stumble and fall.  
I over compensate  
And hurt myself.

#### QUEER

I'm curious  
And seek answers.  
I overcome fear  
And become queer.

#### TRANS

Trans-gender  
A gender transition  
I transform  
And change position

#### WOMAN

I am renewed  
I feel better ?  
I am femme  
Fierce and fabulous

#### QUEEN

I am loyal  
To my true self  
I am royal  
Noble & proud

JG, 2017

### CHOOSING A TITLE

We arrived at the title of this publication based on a suggestion from one of you all. We think it's a good one, but we're open to changing it, and we like the idea of having the title change seasonally or over time. If you have an idea for a title, please send it to us at the address in the foreword, and we'll include them to be voted on in the next issue.

# KEEP THE FIRES BURNING

A PUBLICATION BY AND FOR  
CALIFORNA PRISONERS

ISSUE 1 | Winter 2018

### Foreword

To our friends, comrades, and co-organizers,

Welcome to the pilot edition of "Keep the Fires Burning." Thank you so much to the folks who have contributed so far. We hope to include many more pieces in the future, and to expand the breadth of the paper with your guidance.

As "editors" we try our best to adhere to the principles we laid out in our submission form: the pieces we receive are published as close to how we receive them as possible. This includes not making judgments on spelling, etc (though if you want us to spell check your work we can). Included work is consistent with our our Points of Unity, and all work here is published with the authors consent. IWOC is committed to horizontalism, and so all works have been published using pseudonyms or initials. We won't publish work which violent or sexual in nature (in order to avoid censure by the state), nor will we publish work that the state could use to incriminate the author, the organization, or anyone else (please keep this in mind when sending us work!) We think the pieces here, and

many others we've received thus far, are thought provoking and deserve to be read by you all.

Our hope is that this will be a platform for analysis, collaboration, accountability, and mutual building. If you have thoughts on the editorial process thus far, the newsletter as a whole, its title, or a piece of writing in particular, please definitely write to us and be a part of what we hope will be an ongoing discussion over the walls.

Inside Outside, All on the Same Side,  
IWOC-Oakland

P.S. When you write, please indicate whether or not you would like your feedback published. To send feedback, responses, and additional original work, please write to:

IWOC Oakland  
ATTN: Newsletter  
PO Box 6305  
Oakland, CA 94603

### A CALL TO CONSCIOUSNESS

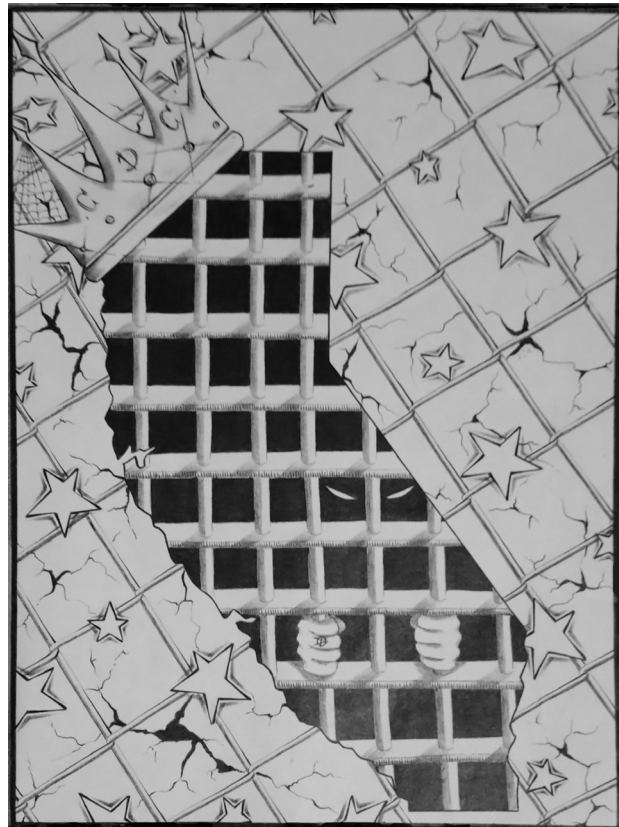
BY: MR. P

In order to meet the starts and social expectations of any particular era, the contemporary society of that day would find ways to modify the word "prison." What began as a place of hard labor soon transformed into a facility to house the criminally insane, which later became a place of corrections. As today's society continues to advance, we saw the need for not only correction but also rehabilitation. Cause and effect became a focus point. School programs and other incentives were put in place and the thirst for the causes and effects of our actions became of paramount concern on paper. However paradoxical in form, prisons remain as was for most of us. Simply a place to house the undesirables, those who dared to infringe- or were accused of infringing - on the rules, regulations, and laws that bind us in the harmony of God's Laws.

Soon, the cause of our misdeeds became even less relevant, when the effects of those misdeeds produced a monetary value beyond comprehension. Prisons became a new way of life, as the ugly head of greed took form and the scales of justice bared witness to its creed of being blind and unbalanced. Those in power became the modern day Robin hoods, as they stole from the poor and gave to the rich. Prisons upon prisons were being built at the taxpayers' expense, as our elected officials indulged in a game of *Monopoly* in which they, and only they, would happily land on Broadway each time a conviction would occur, while the less fortunate could never even seem to pass *Go*. Rehabilitation became second-seated and lost in thought as prisons upon prisons became manifested throughout the States.

In order to mainstream the masses in an orderly form and generate support from the unconscious individuals, once again paradoxical procedures were put in place on paper. Regulations and guidelines were placed on paper to assure

the rights of those incarcerated were not violated. However, the catch was that once those rules had been violated by those in charge, it objective and main focal point. In the words of the “prophet” Kahlil Gibran, it is only when your spirit goes wandering that you alone unguarded commit a wrong unto others and therefore unto yourself. I’ve given this much thought over the yeras. As I gazed upon the reflection of my ill deeds, all of which was selfish and unwarranted, and I humbly accept the Court’s decision handed down to me. I find comfort in my remorse, for it is the pathway to my heavenly desires, that I may someday rise from the ashes of my destruction, as the phoenix, and grown into the magificent being God created me to be. And with that, need your help and encouragement and understanding.



Artwork by M.R.

## Behind Enemy Lines

**T**he belly of the beast burys countless prisoner’s alive & within these concrete toombs some discover there true purpose. As a revolutionary you are transformed from a criminal into a revolutionary in mind body & spirit and seek to become a part of the solution to what’s plaguing the Black and oppressed communities.

You also utilize all of your strength and energy in trying to liberate Black and oppressed people by opposing the fascist pigs who are daily murdering and burtalizing people of color. The state targets revolutionaries and people of like mind because of there potential to wake people up to there condi-

tions, and combats these issues on all fronts be them political, cultural, Economic, Social, and at times military, succesfully.

Behind enemy lines, and in the Trenches you have to struggle daily to win freedoms, the oppressors want nothing more than to destroy you and/or keep you submissive to there rule. We must unite & fight in order to win, or do not loose with stiff resistance.

with love n struggle

-Amani

## Ode to Jimmy Santiago Baca

A prisoner poet  
who didn’t even know it.  
A voice for the voiceless  
who wanted to show it.  
One day in his cell, Jimmy  
In the face of death  
chose his path in life  
and was blessed.  
He drew a line in the sand.  
and took a stand.  
He wrote and typed  
his way to freedom.  
An immigrant in his own land.  
where he found...  
*a place to stand.*

JG, 2017

§§§

## Black Cat University By: D.P. Allah

**R**evolutionary Greetings of peace from the God! I recently suggested to some wobblies that IWOC would benefit from a “university” where ‘rades would learn and develop as organizers members etc. The point of my suggestion is 2 fold building and power. How can we raise consciousness if we don’t know what that power is! And how does we get Power if we don’t know what that Power is!

IWW is building on syndicalist and OBU principles. Can anyone tell me what union syndaclism is? Its not in websters dictionary is it anarchy is it socialism/communism and how

## Earthquakes

Earthquakes of uncontrollable anger,  
blood-boiling rage,  
turning my face various shades  
of red and pink.  
Huffing and puffing,  
and crying hot tears  
which roll down my cheeks.  
It has happened over the years,  
earthquakes of stupendous joy,  
of wondrous changes,  
transformation of the self,  
of my identity.  
Love lost and found  
across the landscapes  
of concrete and bars,  
like cool, sweet, juicy grapes.

Earthquakes in Pakistan,  
geopolitical spectrums  
from Washington D.C. to Japan  
are erupting and shaking.  
The world is on the brink  
of war and mass destruction.  
Too much hatred and violence,  
we need more positive production.

Earthquakes of conciousness,  
Spiritual and political.  
as I read and think  
and pray to unkown deities  
I don’t know what’s next,  
but I hope it’s something good.  
We should all pause and think  
of what it be and what it should!

Do you feel any earthquakes?

JG, 2017

do I as an IWOC use this to my vantage when dealing with these rich slave makers of the poor!

I didn’t suggest the formation of “university” as another meaningless play for dogmatic representation of ideals no but as a forum for direct action and development of the free California movement. California has 35 prisons 1/3 of the population are on some type of sensitive needs yard the old culture convicts are being re-integrated into general population. But those who are actively struggling for the end of not only

the oppressive and repressive inhumane torcher system but the deconstruction of the pig. The pig is eating revoultionaries up everday. So called actives are campaigning for brownie points with the greenwall. Instead of pushing direct actions to take back control over these prisons the university “could show comrades how to deconstruct the title 15 and win day to day battles. and how to hit these babyions at home (the pocket book) I’ve wanted to give power to the people then we have to establish a organ of direct action.

For example the only way to proselytize is through the chapel or on a 1 on 1 basis if each facility deveopled protests that mimicked our IWW supporters on the free cipher. we could support stoppages and slowdowns etc in a organized fashion as well as develop war chests for comrades who are faced with repression. there are many types of function the “university” can have. we just have to DO... Peace

## Editors Response:

When we read Black Cat University, we read the line, “Can anyone tell me what union syndicalism is?,” as a direct question to us, and to any other potential readers. Our understanding of syndicalism is that is an economic system and movement toward that system. Syndicalist seek to arrange the economy such that industries are owned and democratically managed by the workers themselves, typically through a combination of labor unions and confederations of those worker-owned and -managed industries and the geographic areas they inhabit. It is distinct from but related and interwoven with communism, socialism, and anarchism, and has not always historically been explicitly revolutionary in its strategy. Historical examples include in the CNT/FAI in Spain, the Argentine Regional Workers’ Federation, and the Italian Syndicalist Union. While the I.W.W. is technically explicitly *not* syndicalist (or any other -ist or -ism), it does seek to create a world where the economy is democratically managed by the workers themselves. IWOC Oakland’s analysis, while not homogeneous, is somewhat distinct from this.

We see prisons, jails, detention centers, the police, and the entirety of the legal system as the primary means of upholding white supremacy and suppressing mass discontent under capitalism. Incarceration is the main tool of keeping us all under the boot of the powerful, because those systems of oppression require that a portion of the working class be disciplined in order to function, have their agency and humanity systematically stripped form them, have their communities fragmented and their relationships to the outside world severed. This has been achieved in the past, and continues to be, through other forms as well, whether it be chattel slavery, jim crow laws etc, however, the net result is that the entirety of the working class is disciplined into subservience. We think that the only way to bring about any real and lasting change in this world is for this portion of the working class to build their own power. We tend to think that the horizontal and decentralized nature of the IWW/syndicalist model has things to offer us in that regard. What do y’all think of union syndicalism, the IWW, and the analysis above?

§