



Word Search

R S F I E S T A S C E F F E C T
 E E P M E L A C E R A T I O N S
 T I W M S F O C C U U V U L A B
 I R S O H O N E Y M O O N E R N
 R A O R P O L P R B R Y F A A R
 W V U T A L B T O U S E D H A L
 Y O N A S I L L Y R A U P I N E
 K S D L L S A I V L P R N A W G
 S D P I A H B B W E O I D G W G
 S A R Z N D S Y T S S S B I A I
 P N O E T I U W F Q Q T K P G E
 X D O D R H I A T U S I I J C S
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 S E N O A Y L B I S S I M R E P

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| ACCEPT | ACNE | AEONS | ASLANT |
| AUREOLE | BLABS | BRAD | BURLESQUES |
| BYWAY | CAUDAL | CELLS | CHIEFLY |
| CRUMB | DANDLE | DICS | EFFECT |
| FIESTAS | FOOLISH | CNUS | HIATUS |
| HONEYMOONER | IMMORTALIZED | LACERATIONS | LEGGIEST |
| ONES | ORPHAN | OVARIES | PERMISSIBLY |
| PINE | PROP | RAIN | SILLY |
| SIREN | SKYWRITER | SOUNDPROOF | UVULA |
| VESTICE | VOYEURISTIC | WAGGLE | WILLPOWER |

RIDDLES

1. If eleven plus two is one; what does nine plus five equal?
2. A doctor and a bus driver are both in love with the same woman, an attractive girl named Sarah. The bus driver had to go on a long bus trip that would last a week. Before he left, he gave Sarah seven apples. Why?

Answers:

1. 11 o'clock plus 2 hours = 1 o'clock 9 o'clock plus 5 hours = 2 o'clock
2. An apple a day keeps the doctor away!

CA Governor Vetoes 'Mandela Act' to Limit Solitary Confinement, 'Torture of Black and Brown People' | Davis Vanguard

Date: October 01, 2022 | By The Vanguard Staff

SACRAMENTO, CA – Opponents of solitary confinement said late this week it's "disappointing" California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed the "Mandela Act," a measure that would prevent "the torture of Black and Brown people in jails, prisons and immigration detention facilities."

AB 2632, the California Mandela Act on Solitary Confinement authored by Assemblymember Chris Holden (D-Pasadena), would have placed "comprehensive limits on the use of solitary confinement in jails and prisons, and is the first bill in the nation to also cover private immigration detention facilities.

The legislation would have banned the use of solitary confinement against pregnant people, individuals with certain disabilities, as well as individuals under 26 and over 59, said advocates, defining "solitary confinement" as holding a person in a cell with severe restrictions on physical movement and minimal or zero contact with people for more than 17 hours a day.

"This bill would have sent a clear message that California will not allow the torture of black and brown people in its jails, prisons and immigration detention facilities," said Jackie Gonzalez, Policy Director with Immigrant Defense Advocates.

Gonzalez, adding "It is disappointing that the Governor chose to block this goal, and ignore the will of the legislature and the people of California," said the measure received broad support in the legislature and public.

"California has a dark history on the issue of solitary confinement, and this bill was our chance to get it right on this issue," said Holden in a statement. "The scientific consensus and the international standards are clear, solitary confinement is torture and there must be limitations and oversight on the practice."

Newsom, in his veto message, said he was "sympathetic to the bill's intent, and promised to direct the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to "develop regulations that would restrict the use of segregated confinement except in limited situations, such as where the individual has been found to have engaged in violence in the prison."

However, advocates of the bill said the "regulatory framework proposed by Governor Newsom in his veto message does not address the need for change in our jails and private immigration detention facilities, nor will it address the broad change that needs to take place on this issue."

Newsom said he vetoed the legislation because it was "overly broad," claiming it lacked exceptions for officials to use solitary confinement in circumstances when segregated housing could "protect the safety of all incarcerated individuals in the institution."

But those who have endured solitary confinement disagreed.

"I spent more than a decade in solitary confinement and I still carry the scars on my soul. During that time I saw many people attempt to take their own life because of how horrific the experience was. Nothing can restore the pain inflicted upon those who have experienced this torture, but this bill would prevent future generations from experiencing this harm, and serve as a model for other states to follow," said Kevin McCarthy, a solitary survivor and undergraduate with UC Berkeley Underground Scholars.

Advocates estimate more than 50,000 people are in solitary confinement in the U.S. – besides CA, other states have introduced legislation seeking to limit the practice.

Word Search

S S A B E T H I C Z A R S E S Y
 T Y S G N S W E E P S T A K E S
 U I J E A Y S B O C L A C E S A
 N H M S N M U M B L E I S S L E
 F O D O D L U J I L L U Z J U N
 F W R R E R E T S L O H P U C U
 I I E U R T S V O H S A G R R T
 K S P E E L S R E V O U T I A R
 S R R N R N K E Q L R Z A S T B
 I A O F I N F Y A U T I S T I C
 D S O C I F I R O L A C P S V L
 Y S F F O T S A L B P R S V E R
 L E E C I F F O A P A S T E L S
 S S D N A L D A B R O F R Z Y C

ACES
 AUTISTIC
 BLOATS
 CORK
 ETHIC
 GAMUT
 JURISTS
 MUMBLE
 OMIT
 REEL
 SACS
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 ZEBU

ASH
 BADLANDS
 CALORIFIC
 CZARS
 EUROS
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ASPS
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 LEVELNESS
 NOSY
 PASTELS
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 UNEASY

ASSES
 BLASTOFFS
 COFFEEHOUSE
 EKES
 FORBAD
 IRONY
 LUCRATIVELY
 OFFICE
 QUARTZ
 ROLICKS
 SWEEPSTAKES
 UPHOLSTERER

KEEP THE FIRES BURNING - SPECIAL ISSUE

Welcome to a special issue of Keep The Fires Burning!

We do our best to be as informed and up to date as possible on what goes down nationwide in and around prisons and amongst all of the people working hard against them. It's our job and pleasure to pass that knowledge on to you all. We think that the news in this issue warranted a special printing of our newsletter and we hope it generates a lot of conversation. As always we welcome any thoughts or comments you have on what is happening in Alabama. If any of you have statements or comments about the strike that you would like shared or published, we welcome those as well. What follows is a series of articles from mainstream and movement media sources as well as from statements from people inside. We hope that you find what's happening as inspiring as we do and we hope to hear from you soon. #ShutDownADOC2022 - Love and Rage, Keep The Fires Burning

"The ADOC is a machine that generates billions of dollars off our Free Labor and the warehousing of our bodies -State and Federal allocations. Plus, we spend every dime we get with them. We are a "Captive Market" and we feed the BEAST. But, today is a day of awakening. It's time for a new era, a new model for addressing societal ills. It's time for a new era, a new model for addressing societal ills. It's time to move from PUNITIVE to RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

THEREFORE, ITS ON US- ALABAMA'S INCARCERATED SLAVES TO SHUT THE MACHINE DOWN, STOP THE FLOW OF THE MONEY THEN LEVERAGE OUR JUST DUE.

LET IT BE UNDERSTOOD THAT:
On September 26th, at 12:01 a.m. Everyone with an AIS and Z number, Male and Female,. White, Black, Hispanic - EVERY INCARCERATED HUMAN BEING IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA'S CUSTODY WILL BE UNITED IN A STATEWIDE WORK STRIKE IN PROTEST OF THE CONTINUED INSTITUTION OF NEOSLAVERY AND STAND IN SOLIDARITY IN THE CAUSE OF OUR HUMAN RIGHT TO PURSUE LIFE, LIBERTY AND FREEDOM. THEREFORE, WE WILL NO LONGER BE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR OWN DEHUMANIZATION. ALABAMA MUST CHANGE AND THEY MUST CHANGE...

NOW...NOT NEXT SESSION, NOT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DOJ LITIGATION... BUT RIGHT NOW TODAY! AND TO CLEAR UP ANY AND ALL MISCONCEPTIONS... THE QUESTION OF HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO LAST? 1 DAY? 2 DAYS?

WELL THAT'S A QUESTION FOR THE ADOC... HOW LONG CAN 25 PEOPLE RUN A PRISON WITH 1000,1800, 2300, etc. PRISONERS? HOW LONG WILL THE STATE OF ALABAMA REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE REALITY THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER MAINTAIN A SAFE, SECURE, SANITARY AND HUMANE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM?

HOW LONG WILL THE STATE OF ALABAMA CONTINUE TO TREAT HUMANS AS CHATTEL? WELL WE ARE READY AND WILLING TO SIT RIGHT WHERE WE ARE UNTIL THE STATE OF ALABAMA IS READY AND WILLING TO RESPECT OUR HUMANITY AND RIGHT TO REHABILITATION AND RE-ENTRY INTO SOCIETY.

SO ASK THE STATE OF ALABAMA AND HER OFFICIALS...HOW LONG CAN THEY HOLD UP THIS SINKING SLAVE SHIP?

Sincerely Yours, ALABAMA'S SLAVES"



KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

State of Alabama Department of Corrections

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JOHN Q. HAMM
COMMISSIONER

MEDIA ADVISORY

September 28, 2022

WORK STOPPAGES CONTINUE AT ADOC FACILITIES

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – Most major male facilities of the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) are still experiencing work stoppages to varying degrees. Each facility is different, and as a result each facility's operations are affected differently. The work stoppages began Monday, September 26, 2022, as part of a protest at the Criminal Justice Center in Montgomery.

Since the beginning of these work stoppages, controlled movement and other security measures have been deployed to maintain a secure environment. The ADOC does not comment on specific security procedures due to the safety of the inmates, our staff, and the public.

All facilities remain operational. However, these work stoppages have affected food services given that inmate workers make up a large part of the facility support workforce. Facilities have been on a holiday meal schedule since Monday. This schedule allows for two meals instead of three. This is not a retaliatory measure but logistically necessary to ensure that other critical services are being provided.

Once the work stoppages end, facilities will once again be able to provide regular meal service. ADOC is hopeful that regular meal service can be restored as soon as possible.

Some programming, including Ingram State Technical College classes, have been limited but most have not been affected because most programs have their own staff.

It is common practice in prisons nationwide to utilize inmate workers to help provide various critical services like food service, laundry, etc.

Alabama Prisoner Strike Continues into Fifth Day

By Ryan Fatica, Contributor ▶ September 30, 2022

Prisoners across Alabama launched a coordinated work stoppage Monday, refusing to attend their work assignments and essentially shutting down normal operations of the prison system in the state.

Although the exact number of prisoners on strike is unknown, an outside organizer with prisoner support group Both Sides of the Walls estimates that about 80% of Alabama prisoners have participated in the strike. On Wednesday, the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) admitted that strikes were occurring at **“most major male facilities.”** There are approximately 16,000 prisoners assigned to major male facilities in Alabama.

The inhumane conditions in Alabama prisons have been extensively documented, including in a 2019 Department of Justice report that found that the ADOC **“does not reasonably protect prisoners from rampant violence”** and sexual abuse, and that conditions in Alabama prisons **“violate the Constitution.”**

Unicorn Riot spoke with two different prisoners incarcerated at Fountain Correctional Facility near Atmore. One who goes by Swift Justice when speaking with the media and another who goes by Logical Solutions. Swift said that 100% of prisoners at their facility are currently on strike. When asked how long he thought the strike would continue, he said that he believed organizers were requesting **“that they abandon these jobs indefinitely.”**

Logical Solutions told us that prisoners are unified and the environment around him is peaceful. **“It’s not chaotic and it’s nonviolent,”** he said. **“No inmates have any kind of tensions with each other. And neither are we showing any kind of tensions with the authorities.”**

Solutions said that prisoners have realized that they no longer want to work for the prison system that’s keeping them locked up. **“It’s simply saying that we are refusing to work because there’s no reward,”** he said. **“There’s no recognition, it’s not doing us any good and all that we doing is contributing to a system that’s encaging us.”**

At Limestone Correctional Facility (the state’s largest prison, located in Harvest), Kinetik Justice, a striking prisoner who also goes by his legal name Robert Earl Council, told Unicorn Riot that sentencing laws and the parole board in Alabama have effectively made it impossible for certain prisoners to ever go home. In those situations, there is little to no motivation for them to continue to work prison jobs that keep the prison functioning.

“It makes no sense for us to continue to contribute to our own oppression,” Kinetik said. **“We finance our own incarceration through our free labor and spending every dime we get in they canteens and so forth. It is our money and our family’s money that is used to keep us incarcerated and oppressed like this.”**

On Friday, prisoner advocates launched a phone zap campaign to demand Kinetik be released from solitary confinement where he was transferred to on Wednesday—a move which advocates attribute to him **“exposing the ADOC & participating in the AL prison strike.”**

In our exclusive interview with Kinetik below, he describes being assaulted by multiple prison guards and then being brought to **“restricted housing,”** also known as solitary confinement.

These conditions are not unique to just Alabama prisons, says Kinetik.

“I would tell prisoners across the country to understand what we’re doing and to link up with one another and understand that economics is what it’s about. And let’s get together in a nationwide shutdown, let’s shut all this down and let’s cut the money off and make them get it right.”

Kinetik Justice

The Department of Corrections has admitted that prisoner labor is necessary for its prisons to function properly. **“All facilities remain operational,”** the department wrote in a press release Wednesday. **“However, these work stoppages have affected food services given that inmate workers make up a large part of the facility support workforce.”**

When asked who is performing the essential activities of the prison, Swift responded: **“Nobody.”**

During previous strikes, Swift said, prison staff would perform services previously fulfilled by prison workers, but due to staff shortages, they are unable to do so. **“When they have more staff members, the actual staff, the correctional officers, the wardens, the lieutenants, the captains, would actually be the ones who went in and cooked the food and they actually served the food,”** he said.

Instead, Swift said the prison administration is busing in work release prisoners as temporary replacement workers, commonly known as **“scabs.”** However in this instance, the bused-in prisoners aren’t necessarily consenting to their role.

“So what you have is a huge staff shortage,” he explained. **“What they doing and what we’re hearing that they’re doing is actually bringing in work release inmates, and threatening these work release inmates: ‘You do not go and participate and make these meals or making sandwiches, that we’re going to serve these guys, we will send you back behind the fence and you will no longer be in honor camp or work release status.’”**

The endemic understaffing in the Alabama prison system is one of the subjects of a federal lawsuit filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program against the Alabama Department of Corrections. The lawsuit, *Braggs v. Dunn*, was filed in 2014 and exposes a laundry list of horrendous conditions within the prison system, including a serious lack of mental health treatment. In a sweeping 2021 **“Omnibus Remedial Order,”** the judge in the case ordered the Department of Corrections to make a number of changes to its operations, including fulfilling all mandatory staff positions by July 1, 2025.

In a striking [video posted to Twitter](#), a prisoner at the Limestone Correctional Facility interviewed a work release prisoner who said he had been bused from the North Alabama Community Work Center in Decatur, Alabama to prepare meals for the striking prisoners. In the video, the white prisoner wears a white winter cap and thermal shirt. He looks directly into the camera.

“My name’s Lebron Gregory and they forced me to come over here from Decatur to put my life in jeopardy by working against the inmates, my own people, in this peaceful protest.”

Lebron Gregory

“I believe in what y’all doing,” Gregory explains. **“I’ve got a 21-year sentence. Y’all are helping me.”**

According to Christina Horvat, an organizer with Both Sides of the Walls, Gregory has since been placed in the segregation unit at Limestone Correctional for leaving the kitchen where he was assigned in order to join the striking prisoners. In the video, Gregory reported that other work release prisoners had also refused to work and had been placed **“in a lock up cell.”**

During a protest outside the ADOC offices in the state capital of Montgomery on Monday, the first day of the strike, organizers of the group Both Sides of the Walls released a list of demands. The group's demands included a variety of reforms to sentencing law and parole board policies, including a demand that the Habitual Felony Offender Act (HFOA) be repealed.

The HFOA was passed in 1977 and its mandatory punishments include a life without parole sentence for anyone convicted of a Class A felony with any three prior felonies on their record, and a life sentence for anyone who was convicted of a Class B felony with any three prior felonies on their record.

According to [Smart Justice Alabama](#), the law means **"someone could be sentenced to die in prison for a single burglary or robbery and three prior forgery or drug convictions."**

However, Swift said that there are no centralized demands, but that each group of striking prisoners has their own demands based on their specific grievances with the prison system. As for Swift and those around him, they believe their problems can only be solved at a higher level than the Alabama Department of Corrections. **"We're not asking for demands the ADOC can control,"** said Swift. **"Our problems are not consisting of policy changing inside the ADOC. All of our demands are legislative related."**

In the meantime, prisoners are working hard to maintain the strike in the midst of increasingly difficult conditions, including not having enough to eat.

"Our meals consist of two bologna sandwiches in the morning time and two bologna sandwiches at dinner time," said Swift. **"And when you do the calorie intake on that right there, a bologna sandwich with cheese, and on wheat bread, only equals up to 240 calories. So basically what we're getting daily on that right there is just barely reaching 1000 calories a day."**

There have also been unconfirmed reports of violence against striking prisoners by prison guards. In a [cell phone video](#) presumably taken by prisoners and posted to Twitter by the group Unheard Voices of the Concrete Jungle, four guards can be seen beating one prisoner. Unicorn Riot was not able to independently verify the location of this event, but according to the tweet, it took place at Bullock Correctional Facility near Union Springs.

Kinetik said that after he refused to concede to a strike negotiation with authorities at Limestone Correctional Facility Wednesday, a special response team searched his cell and told him he was going to **"restricted housing."**

"At that point, one grabbed me by one arm and tried to break my wrist," said Kinetik. **"One grabbed me by the leg and then they slammed me to the floor and about four more came and they dragged me out of the dorm and threw me on the trash cart outside and pulled me to the infirmary on a trash cart with handcuffs that were so tight on my hands that I can't feel my fingers today. Right now I can't feel my fingers."**

After years of being promised reforms that would change the material conditions of their daily lives, Alabama prisoners continue to live in harsh conditions with no hope of improvement or release in sight. Now, prisoners say they've had enough.

"Basically, the message that we are sending is, the courts have shut down on us, the parole board has shut down on us. This society has long ago shut down on us. So basically, if that's the case, and you're not wanting us to return back to society, you can run these facilities yourselves."

Swift Justice

Officials Move to Squash Massive Strike Across Alabama Prisons

— *It's Going Down*, Sep 28, 2022

Thousands of prisoners have launched a historic work strike across what even the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) is admitting is “most major male facilities,” throwing the system into a form of modified lockdown, as prison authorities attempt to break the strike by bringing in prisoners from other facilities. “This is a huge thing, this is a statewide initiative,” said abolitionist organizer, journalist, and podcast co-host of *Millennials are Killing Capitalism*, Jared Ware, who sat down with *It's Going Down* to talk about the strike.

MESSAGE FROM THE INSIDE

WE, THE INCARCERATED CITIZENS IN ADOC, DEMAND THAT THE U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INTERVENE AND PUT AN IMMEDIATE STOP TO ALABAMA'S SYSTEMATIC DENIAL OF OUR HUMAN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.

THE STATE OF ALABAMA IS IN THE MIDST OF A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS DUE TO 8TH AMENDMENT VIOLATIONS. THIS CRISIS HAS OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF ANTIQUATED SENTENCING LAWS THAT LED TO OVERCROWDING, NUMEROUS DEATHS, SEVERE PHYSICAL INJURY, AS WELL AS MENTAL ANGUISH TO INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.

THIS HUMANITARIAN CRISIS LED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FILING SUIT AGAINST KAY IVEY AND ADOC YET, NOTHING HAS CHANGED OR GOTTEN BETTER ONLY WORSE.

THEREFORE, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LIVES, WE ARE EXERCISING OUR 1ST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO PEACEFULLY PROTEST THIS UNCONSTITUTIONAL UNSAFE AND HYPER EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEM. WE NEED HELP AND WE NEED IT NOW!

AS ONE UNIT, WE BAND TOGETHER AND STATE THE FOLLOWING:

- *REPEAL THE HABITUAL OFFENDER LAW IMMEDIATELY
- *MAKE THE PRESUMPTIVE SENTENCING STANDARDS RETROACTIVE IMMEDIATELY
- *REPEAL THE DRIVE-BY SHOOTING STATUE
- *CREATE STATE WIDE CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT
- *MANDATORY PAROLE CRITERIA THAT WILL GUARANTEE PAROLE TO ALL ELIGIBLE PERSONS WHO MEET THE CRITERIA
- *STREAMLINED REVIEW PROCESS FOR MEDICAL FURLOUGHS AND REVIEW OF ELDERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
- *REDUCTION OF THE 30 YEAR MINIMUM FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS TO NO MORE THAN 15 YEARS BEFORE THEY ARE ELIGIBLE FOR PAROLE
- *DO AWAY WITH LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

MESSAGE FROM THE INSIDE

We, the incarcerated citizens in ADOC, demand that the US Justice Department intervene and put an immediate stop to Alabama's systematic denial of our human dignity and rights.

The State of Alabama is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis due to 8th Amendment violations. This crisis has occurred as a result of antiquated sentencing laws that led to overcrowding. Numerous deaths, severe physical injury, as well as mental anguish to incarcerated individuals.

This humanitarian crisis led to the Department of Justice filing suit against Kay Ivey and ADOC, yet nothing has changed or gotten better only worse.

Therefore, for the sake of our lives, we are exercising our 1st Amendment right to peacefully protest this unconstitutional, unsafe, and hyper-exploitative system. We need help and we need it now!

As one unit, we band together and state the following:

1. Repeal the habitual offender law immediately
2. Make the presumptive sentencing standards retroactive immediately
3. Repeal the drive-by shooting statute
4. Create statewide conviction integrity unit
5. Mandatory parole criteria that will guarantee parole to all eligible persons who meet the criteria
6. Streamlined review process for medical furloughs and review of elderly incarcerated individuals for immediate release
7. Reduction of the 30-year minimum for juvenile offenders to no more than 15 years before they are eligible for parole
8. Do away with life without parole

The Strike Begins

The strikes, which kicked off on Monday, took place alongside protests on the other side of the prison walls in Montgomery, Alabama, which delivered a set of the prisoners' demands, centered around "broad criminal justice reforms and changes to the state's prison conditions." Also central to the prisoners' demands is the issue of parole. As WAFF-48 reported:

More than four years ago, Alabama prisons were overcrowded to the point of being unconstitutional, according to federal court judges. Now, new data shows fewer paroles may be compounding that problem. In just four years, parole denials in Alabama nearly doubled.

That's according to data from the Alabama Bureau of Pardons & Paroles compiled by the ACLU. That data shows the parole board denied 46% of applications in 2017. In 2021, 84% of parole applications were denied.

This crisis also has a racial dynamic, as the ACLU argued in a recent report:

The rate of parole denial is even more severe for black people in Alabama prisons. The current parole board has granted relief to white candidates at more than double the rate of black candidates. So far in FY 2022, 93 percent of black parole candidates have been denied, while 84 percent of white candidates have been denied. Black candidates saw a grant rate of just 7 percent compared to white candidates at 16 percent. The board has provided no explanation for this disparity.

For years, prisoners have been arguing that incarcerated workers could make changes by bringing the prison system to its knees through coordinated strikes. In the text, *Let the Crops Rot in the Field*, the Free Alabama Movement wrote:

Just like the Institution of Chattel Slavery, Mass Incarceration is in essence an Economic System which uses human beings as its nuts and bolts. Therefore, our new approach must be Economically based, and must be focused on the factors of production- the people being forced into this slave labor.

If we are to end Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery, which only those caught up in the slave system can do, then we must Unify nationwide from inside of these prisons and we must stop our labor and LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELD.

"I think if we look at the prisoner movement from 2010, if you look at that phase of prison organizing until now, its one of the more remarkable movements in this country, in terms of prisoners theorizing and testing out their theories in practice, in struggle," argued Ware, noting prison strikes in Georgia in 2010, Texas in 2016, and the nationwide prison strikes that took place in 2016 and 2018. Prisoners in Alabama, by the thousands, are now carrying this torch forward, by refusing their labor on a state wide level. "What's impressive about this strike is that they managed to organize all of the workers," noted Ware, which includes many prisoners who have worked their jobs on the inside for decades.

In response, prison officials are having to keep prisons on a form of modified lock-down and do some of the work usually done by prisoners themselves. "Staffing levels are so low, they need a lot of prison labor to run the facilities. [Prisoners] refusing to cook and clean are the two most important aspects...it keeps the guards busy," Ware stated. One prisoner even posted to social media commenting, "Warden and officers are working in the kitchen...very aggravated trying to perform kitchen duties..."

On social media, prisoners, journalists, and supporters are also posting photos of thrown together lunches,

made up of unheated hot dogs and cheese sandwiches. One researcher posted a photo of pieces of bread with slices of cheese being served to prisoners, stating, “This is breakfast at Bibb prison today, one of two cold meals they’ll likely be served today. ADOC seems to be attempting to starve an end to the prison worker strike.” According to the Alabama Political Reporter:

In a statement released by an individual involved in the organizing efforts on Tuesday, the individual, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, expressed the organizing group’s demand of ADOC Commissioner John Hamm to rescind a supposed order for major facilities to begin “bird feeding” incarcerated individuals, a practice of providing smaller meals than usual in an attempt to starve out protests.

In response to the photos of these meals going viral, ADOC issued a press release stating:

...these work stoppages have affected food services given that inmate workers work up a large part of the facility support workforce. Facilities have been on a holiday meal schedule since Monday... This is not a retaliatory measure but logistically necessary to ensure that other critical services are being provided.

But prisoners also report that ADOC officials are attempting to break the strike in other ways: either through repression, or by bringing in other prisoners, or by threatening strikers with being transferred. On Twitter, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak wrote:

The Comrades in Alabama prisons report in that more people have joined the ongoing strike. Alabama prisonrats are now moving in lower security prisoners to do the work higher security prisoners are refusing to.

A video posted by the Free Alabama Movement features an interview with a prisoner, stating:

Alabama prison officials are forcing men at work release facilities to prepare meals for striking prisons. This man secreted himself from the kitchen to give this interview. He feared for his safety and wanted to get the word out.

On the fourth day of the strike, the Free Alabama Movement also reported that “Robert Earl Council [also known as Kinetik Justice] has been assaulted by ADOC correctional officers and placed into the solitary confinement unit. This is at least the second time Mr. Council has been assaulted by ADOC staff in the past 21 months. In January 2021, Mr. Council was beaten nearly to death at Donaldson Correctional Facility.”

Fighting Against Horrific Conditions

For years, prisoners in Alabama have been fighting, organizing, and striking to improve conditions – and for good reason. In 2021, “people incarcerated in Alabama prisons died from violence and drugs in record numbers,” despite a “U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) lawsuit filed against the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) one year [before].”

As Common Dreams wrote:

Organizers circulated a “message from the inside” saying the roughly 25,000 incarcerated people in the state are “in the midst of a humanitarian crisis due to Eighth Amendment violations.” This crisis has occurred as a result of antiquated sentencing laws that led to overcrowding, numerous deaths, [and] severe physical injury, as well as mental anguish to incarcerated individuals,” said the inmates. Along with the overcrowding and chronic understaffing, inmates face the use of solitary confinement as a “protection” measure, “a high level of violence” including rape, a

failure by officials to separate sexually violent offenders from vulnerable inmates, and a lack of “safe and sanitary” living conditions which have reportedly included open sewage, mold, and toxic fumes in kitchen areas.

As the *New York Times* reported:

The Alabama corrections system has drawn the ire of the Justice Department, which released a report in 2019 that outlined “severe, systemic” conditions across the state’s prisons that violated constitutional protection from cruel and unusual punishment because they were in danger of being raped or murdered. The report found that major prisons were at 182 percent of capacity, and that prisoners in the Alabama system endured some of the highest rates of homicide and rape in the country.

In response to the strike, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey simply doubled down on a “law and order” message, stating in a press release, “These “demands” – as the protestors refer to them – are unreasonable and would flat out not be welcomed in Alabama.”

Prisoners Remain Committed to the Strike

But prisoners remain steadfast. In a statement posted to the Free Alabama Movement website, one prisoner wrote:

September 26th, 2022 is a historical and unprecedented day with the success of ALL major prison facilities going on a labor strike. Not one incarcerated citizen reported to their slave jobs which was confirmed by the ADOC Commissioners office. Every incarcerated citizen in ADOC who made this happen should be proud of this accomplishment. You have proven to yourself, the state of Alabama, and the world that over 10,000 men and women “can” stand together where it’s always said it can’t be done.

Gov. Kay Ivey’s response is not shocking at all. None of Alabama’s taxpayers will ever agree that Ivey is the brightest crayon in the box.

It’s time that we ALL understand that public safety is entwined with what takes place in our prisons and our court rooms. It is entwined with what kind of individual we are releasing back to society.

Is time we are given an opportunity to discuss changes in current Alabama laws that have played a significant role in the current issues surrounding the inhumane conditions writhing ADOC. it’s time the lawmakers give us an opportunity to be heard and present solutions. And yes, it’s time Alabama stops telling those who are within the prison system nothing will change.

Another prisoner stated:

Today across the state, incarcerated individuals and their families are bannng together as one in a show of solidarity against the inhumane and unjust treatment of them all. No matter what role you play in this state you have influence, a voice and a choice. It is past time for something to be done in this state and we, the people of Alabama, are tired of standing back and waiting for change to come. Today we start the strongest and hardest fight against the state of Alabama to do what is right for these individuals. No man or woman deserves to be treated as less than animals, we all have basic human rights which you are not allowing. The more harm that comes to these men and women at the hands of Alabama the harder we will fight, we’re not backing down.

News of the strike continues to grow, both in the national press and on local news outlets, with prisoners

continuing to post on social media, sharing news, updates, and messages of solidarity with each other. As one prisoner on the ~~Free Alabama Movement website~~ wrote on the historic importance of the strike, "I don't know how many people are truly paying attention to the revolution taking place right under your noses." But, as the strike continues and more prisoners and their supporters catch wind of the revolt, it's quite possible that the strike may indeed spread.

Alabama prison strike enters second week: Here's what

we know *Published: Oct. 03, 2022, 1:06 p.m. By Savannah Tryens-Fernandes | stryens-fernandes@al.com*

The Alabama prison strike has entered its second week as inmates continue to protest the state's parole and sentencing laws and living conditions inside facilities. On Sept. 26, inmates in all Alabama Department of Corrections prisons stopped working. Inmates normally do the work in food service, laundry, and other tasks that keep prisons running. Alabama is one of only seven states including Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas that do not pay inmates for labor. Shannon Barlow, an inmate at Limestone Correctional Facility told WBHM "there's no hope, there's no promise of a future, and we're the ones basically who have been holding the ceiling up over our own heads all these years and we're just waking up to the fact that this is wrong."

According to WVTM, specific asks from the strikers include the immediate repeal of Alabama's habitual offender law, a repeal of the state's drive-by shooting statute, mandatory parole criteria that guarantees parole for all eligible inmates and ending life without parole sentences.

Last week, Gov. Ivey called the demands unreasonable, and said she hopes her plan to create two new "mega prisons" using COVID relief funds will help address some of the inmates' needs. "No. 1, our goal is for public safety, pure and simple. And the demands that they're giving are just unreasonable, and would probably require whole other legislation, cannot just be mandated unilaterally...we still got our two prisons being built so we can better provide for the safety of the inmates as well as the workers."

Meanwhile, inmates say corrections workers and officials are taking retaliatory measures against them, including reducing the amount of food they receive from three meals a day to two and canceling weekend visits "due to these stoppages and the impact on staff resources."

In an interview with AL.com, Diyawn Caldwell, founder of the advocacy group Both Sides of the Wall and a strike organizer, said she believes canceling visitation will increase tensions. "I think canceling visitation will only compound the frustration inside," Caldwell said in an email.

"These men/women look forward to seeing their family. This is the only contact they physically have with them and this is why a lot of them stay out of any trouble. Many families have taken off work, paid for travel and hotels in preparation of visitation this weekend and they abruptly cancel it because they want to punish the men/women inside for exercising our 1st amendment rights.

Meanwhile, inmates say corrections workers and officials are taking retaliatory measures against them, including reducing the amount of food they receive from three meals a day to two and canceling weekend visits "due to these stoppages and the impact on staff resources." In an interview with AL.com, Diyawn Caldwell, founder of the advocacy group Both Sides of the Wall and a strike organizer, said she believes canceling visitation will increase tensions. "I think canceling visitation will only compound the frustration inside," Caldwell said in an email. "These men/women look forward to seeing their family. This is the only contact they physically have with them and this is why a lot of them stay out of any trouble. Many families have taken off work, paid for travel and hotels in preparation of visitation this weekend and they abruptly cancel it because they want to punish the men/women inside for exercising our 1st amendment rights. They are doing exactly what they have been doing for so long, which is trying to maintain control through loss of privileges for no misconduct, retaliation and fear."

The Department of Justice sued Alabama in December 2020, alleging the failure to protect prisoners from inmate-on-inmate violence and sexual abuse, failure to protect them from excessive force by staff, and failure to provide safe conditions of confinement violate constitutional prohibitions on cruel and unusual punishment. The DOJ first made most of the allegations in April 2019 and said at the time of the lawsuit that Alabama had failed to address problems. However, a trial in the case is not expected until 2024.

Alabama Inmates Strike, Denouncing Prison Conditions

The exact size of the protest, which began on Monday, was not immediately clear. But advocates say thousands of inmates would forgo their usual jobs as cooks and cleaners.

By Eduardo Medina

Sept. 28, 2022

Thousands of Alabama inmate workers began a labor strike this week to protest poor prison conditions across the state, where facilities are overcrowded, understaffed and notoriously dangerous.

The protest, which also calls for broader criminal justice reforms, began on Monday. Diyawn Caldwell, the president of Both Sides of the Wall, an advocacy group, said the organization is coordinating the strike with inmates across the state and predicted that about 80 percent of the roughly 25,000 people in prison would participate in the strike, forgoing their usual jobs as cooks and cleaners.

The strike, an uncommon occurrence in prisons, is intended to draw attention to the overcrowding crisis in Alabama prisons that has long shadowed governors and correctional officials. It also threatens to disrupt the prison system as officials take on the work that inmates usually do.

Ms. Caldwell's husband, Cordarius Caldwell, 34, who is incarcerated at Ventress Correctional Facility on a murder offense, said by phone on Tuesday that inmates had received two sack lunches on Monday and Tuesday, rather than the normal three meals.

The Alabama corrections system has drawn the scrutiny of the Justice Department, which released a report in 2019 that outlined "severe, systemic" conditions across the state's prisons that violated constitutional protection from cruel and unusual punishment because they were in danger of being raped or murdered.

The report found that major prisons were at 182 percent of capacity, and that prisoners in the Alabama system endured some of the highest rates of homicide and rape in the country.

The Alabama Department of Corrections did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment on Tuesday. The department told The Montgomery Advertiser that officers had deployed "security measures" since the start of the strike, but it did not share

more details.

John Hamm, the commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, told The Advertiser that “all facilities are operational and there have been no disruption of critical services.”

Willie Williams, an inmate at the Staton Correctional Center in Elmore County, Ala., said by phone on Tuesday night that he and dozens of other inmates were tired of the “inhumane” conditions at the prison, which he described as a “filthy place” that was covered by mold and overcrowded.

Inmates and activists had been planning the strike since late June, he said, because of a blunt realization: “There is nothing good that comes from” the state corrections department. “There’s no rehabilitation. There’s no compassion.” (Mr. Williams is serving a life sentence for a rape offense, which he said he did not commit.)

Ms. Caldwell said the strike would continue until officials met their demands, including improved living conditions and creating a more transparent and streamlined parole process. The prisoners are calling for creating a review board to oversee the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles and repealing the Habitual Felony Offenders Act, a law that results in longer prison sentences.

“Alabama fails over and over and over again to address the crisis that’s going on,” Ms. Caldwell said by phone on Tuesday night.

Advocates from Alabama Prison Advocacy and Incarcerated Families United and other groups had been scheduling Zoom calls with inmates since late June, asking them to persuade other incarcerated people to participate in the strike, Ms. Caldwell said. The calls were mostly with inmates who had influence among prisoners.

“We set a date and, you know, got the message out and got it clear that, ‘Hey, this is what we’re going to do; if you guys want freedom, you know, you have to walk in unison,’” she added.

The strike comes a week after photos of an emaciated inmate, Kastellio Vaughan, captured the attention of thousands online. His sister posted the photos on Facebook, writing, “Get Help.”

The Alabama Department of Corrections said in a statement on Tuesday that Mr. Vaughan had surgery for an obstructed bowel in August, after a gunshot injury. In September, he was again hospitalized because of complications. The department said he opted to be discharged both times against medical advice and has refused medical

treatment or attention since Sept. 7.

Lee Merritt, a lawyer who is representing Mr. Vaughan and his relatives, said in a statement on Tuesday that the family was trying to get him transferred to a hospital outside of prison. Mr. Vaughan's sister, Kassie, wrote on Facebook that if he did refuse medical help, it was because he was in a "delirious state."

Though Mr. Vaughan's case did not ignite the strike this week, Ms. Caldwell said, it did attract support from hundreds of Alabamians who protested outside the department's headquarters in Montgomery on Monday.

Gov. Kay Ivey's office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment on Tuesday.

Ms. Ivey and her fellow Republican lawmakers approved a plan last year to build two new prisons to relieve overcrowding. But opponents of her plan, including Ms. Caldwell, say that building more prisons will not address the need for criminal justice reforms like those happening in other states and at the federal level.

"Alabama can't build themselves out of the crisis that's going on in the prison system," Ms. Caldwell said. She added: "We are not saying that we're trying to let every murderer or rapist or even serial killer out of prison. We're asking to give these people a fighting chance."

Mr. Caldwell said that it had been easy to persuade inmates to participate in the strike because of the poor conditions in the prison: Moldy bathrooms, congested spaces and a dangerous lack of security.

"We're doing this for us," he said. "I'm doing this for me. I'm doing this for you."

Eduardo Medina is a reporter covering breaking news. @byEduardoMedina

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