**Resisting the International Arms Trade**

Waves of protest disrupted weapons expos across England this fall, following a growing, multi-front campaign against an international arms trade that magnifies conflict around the world.

In London, the Biennial Defense and Security Equipment International (DSEI) exposition took over the ExCel center September 14-17, but 12 days of protests began the week before. A loose confederation of groups independently organized a spectrum of nonviolent actions with the common intent to disrupt preparations ahead of time and at the event itself.

Every day for the week before, exhibitors and their war machine appeared outside the DSEI entrance roads with cars, clambered onto tanks, locked themselves to digging machines, and draped banners from the top of police vans. Some activists camped in the road overnight to prevent after-hours shipments and make clear that the merchants of death are not welcome in London.

Police at times greatly outnumbered demonstrators, lining the entrance roads shoulder to shoulder to protect the equipment roadside as they were.

For several years, London “live event” crews have informally boycotted DSEI and ostracized its event contractors. This year, when desperate text messages from fly-by-night contractors sought help with DSEI, four professional crew workers who are also Young Communist League members decided to take the jobs and act from the inside.

**Surprise Arrests in Two States for Drone War Foe**

A principal organizer for more than a decade of periodic protests at two U.S. drone warfare bases was arrested with little warning as she held signs near the entrance of each base this fall.

The first of Toby Blomé’s two unintended arrests came during the Shut Down Creech actions held September 26 – October 2 outside Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, Nevada. Creech is the heart of training and operations for all U.S. remotely-piloted armed warplanes. This year, more than two dozen people – including members of Veterans for Peace, CodePink and Ban Killer Drones – were arrested along the streets and outside the gatehouse, and draped banners from the top of the highway.

On November 22, Blomé joined several stawbars for the monthly vigil and leafleting at Beale Air Force Base in Marysville, California. Beale is the command center for Global Hawk surveillance drones, an integral component of the global drone warfare enterprise.

Blomé stepped into the same median area painted on the intersection where she’s stood for eleven years to leaflet the departing service members as they stop to enter the highway.

Military police have often disrupted leaflethet’s rights to this “gore” space but never followed through with threats of arrest. The month before, some of the Beale vigilgers had even walked up the entry road a short distance to the gatehouse, and blocked traffic for long enough to pass leaflets to the line of boxed-up vehicles. The vigilgers then returned back to the highway, avoiding arrest.

But this time, military police quickly confronted Blomé. She asserted her free speech rights and the cops withdrew to consult with their superiors. When they returned, they issued a formal order to disperse and then immediately had her arrested. Protesters who were detained inside the area for over two hours, but has yet to be formally charged. While in custody, she used the opportunity to talk about U.S. drone war crimes with everyone she met.

Back in Las Vegas on November 23, Blomé was represented by a pro bono attorney at a pre-trial hearing where the district attorney dropped the Nevada charges.

After these two incidents, Blomé wonders, “Are our anti-drone protests at military bases having a great enough impact that the police are increasing their abuse of power, and cracking down?” For more information, visit shutdowncreech.blogspot.com and facebook.com/OccupyBealeAirForceBase.
Resistance Reflections

by Stellan Vinthagen

No one wants to be locked up in a prison. It is a punishment, an absurd medieval form of punishment that’s really quite primitive. In some prisons, violence, abuse and threats — among guards, prison gangs and individuals — are notorious and systematic. All prisons are not equally violent, but all prisons lock up inmates in a “total institution” that controls every little aspect of their life, 24/7. Therefore, all inmates are — without exception — discipline-punished, deprived of John X and Maling Luther King Jr., part of the struggle; they all spent time inside and it was a constant risk. They were radicals precisely in the sense of not letting that threat stop them.

Thus, all movements striving for fundamental social change will challenge very powerful vested interests; without risking prison time for some people and, at some point, a movement cannot give in.

If sometimes change is possible without risking prison time for some people and, at some point, a movement cannot give in.

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The Nuclear Resister

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Preventing the Crime of Nuclear Sharing

American Testimony in a German Court

John LaForge gave this testimony to a German court last spring in defense of actions taken to halt the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Germany. His testimony conveys the understandable anger of nuclear resistance, edited here for space. The full testimony with footnotes can be found at bit.ly/LaForgeTestimony.

May 31, 2021

To the Court:

My name is John LaForge. I am 65 years old, am a U.S. citizen, and I’ve worked in the peace and anti-nuclear movement for 37 years. I have been employed by the peace organization The Progressive Foundation in the U.S. since 1979 as a researcher, editor of its Nukewatch Quarterly, and co-director. In my first job for Nukewatch, I traveled about 30,000 miles over a 3-month period to visit all 1,000 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile sites then in the United States. The research was for the Nukewatch book Nuclear Heartland which featured the first public atlas detailing the exact locations of the giant ICBMs.

... On July 15, 2018, I was among one of five small groups of people that entered the [Büchel Air] base. I carried “an Appeal to melters away from the runway” which I wrote, and which concerns German domestic and international laws that work at the nuclear weapons base violate. Eighty-four of the people were detained for 24 hours and they took a copy and said they would deliver it to high places.

On August 6, after getting into the base, walking through some woods, and crossing a base road, I took photos, and two of us climbed atop a nuclear weapons silo. From there, we observed from there for over an hour. When we climbed down, the guards’ and police observations were detected and we were detained for 24 hours. During that time, our group was interrogated and we were told “We met the charge of ‘illegal trespass.’” I argued that international law gave us the legal right to enter the Büchel site. I was able to deliver a written appeal to personnel there; and on Hiroshima Day 2018 I went in to inspect the premises for evidence of and bring attention to criminal violations of international treaty law being committed by the United States and Germany.

The evidence that is relevant in this case is whether or not I “illegally” intruded into Büchel premises. It is the prosecutor’s burden to prove that I intruded “illegally.” And my task is to show that my intrusions were not illegal under international law taken for a lawful purpose of stopping NATO, U.S. and German crimes.

... The allegations against me for minor damage to property and illegal trespass are insignificant and trivial when set against the routine ongoing criminal conspiracy to commit massacres using nuclear weapons which is our regular practice at Büchel. A fire fighter rushing into a burning building to save someone inside is not charged with “damage to property” if a door or window is broken. The firefighter’s “damage to property” is excused because of the greater good of seeking to prevent or to avoid harm. In such a case, when such actions are seen to prevent the targeted harm of damage to property on one hand, and injury to a person or the loss of life on the other, the damage to the door is obviously the lesser harm.

But what of a fire not yet burning, but a fire being planned, rehearsed, is intended and set to ignite? And with that some regard Büchel as their Büchel. A fire fighter rushing into a burning building to save someone inside is not charged with “damage to property” if a door or window is broken. The firefighter’s “damage to property” is excused because of the greater good of seeking to prevent or to avoid harm. In such a case, when such actions are seen to prevent the targeted harm of damage to property on one hand, and injury to a person or the loss of life on the other, the damage to the door is obviously the lesser harm.

... [Defendants] belief was that their action, in

embodying, my position regarding the illegality of nuclear weapons.

My experience of trials like these makes me familiar with the judges’ and prosecutors’ warnings about the need to protect property rights. I am accustomed to hear that my defense testimony is not relevant and a waste of valuable time. These shrewd lectures are designed to distract observers, and to pull the wool over the public’s eyes. These lectures often do try some people into thinking that public protests against nuclear weapons are justiciable stunts or mere random acts.

On the contrary, my actions on July 15 and August 6 were demonstrations of respect for, and obedience to the humanitarian laws and principles... It is too easy to dismiss the worst property damage and international trespassing in all history and that kill without being detoured by forces of people to starve.

Often, times, my evidence has been called “irrelevant,” but I’ve learned that what is truly irrelevant in these political court cases is the evidence of mass and damage to fences. It is irrelevant because most of the facts are not in dispute. On July 15 I entered the base to deliver a written appeal to personnel there; and on Hiroshima Day 2018 I went in to inspect the premises for evidence of and bring attention to criminal violations of international treaty law being committed by the United States and Germany.

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...
Daniel Hale’s Sentencing Statement

Your Honor, my surname, “Evenette Hale,” was passed down to me by my father, by his father by his father, and so on—back to the theologian writer Edward Everett Hale, who was a Massachusetts Unitarian columnist for The Atlantic Monthly newspaper writing about issues of abolition and slavery during the pre-Civil War period.

He was the grand nephew of Revolutionary War hero Captain Nathan Hale. Nathan Hale, of course, is well-known for having been executed for his efforts to spy on British troop movements in support of General George Washington’s rebel army as they fought to free the State of Connecticut. Daniel Hale was given only the chance to speak his peace before left to hang three days in a public square as a warning to others would-be saboteurs. It is under these circumstances, an act of espionage is still punishable by death in this country today.

The day after I pled guilty to a violation of the Espionage Act, I purchased a bicycle ride towards the Capitol to clear my head, in search of the statute honoring Captain Hale’s sacrifice. I wish I could say that I wasn’t surprised to find myself next to a “Peace 4 F. Kennedy” Department of Justice building. But there it was, exactly where it said: “in the Captain’s honor.” A security guard took my photo with the statue of Nathan Hale’s head, told me thank you, to which I responded with a shrug and went about my day. From there I came to be at the Lincoln War Memorial Park.

The park was alive and bustling with people speaking different languages, coming to and fro, from across the country. It was a reminder of a different world. Of the many awe-inspiring commemorative monuments surrounding the reflective pool, I believe the Vietnam War Memorial to be the most striking—standing as a litany for the number of names and a testimony to the numbers that have suffered at the hands of war. The more than 58,000 names of every American killed in action etched into a 40-foot granite wall stands as a testament to the loss that we cannot reclaim. Our Nation’s commitment to never forget the fallen. By contrast, were it not for the intervention of every person killed would require it to be another four miles long.

Curiously, there is still no monument to commemorate the formal end of the Iraqi War. I often wonder how we’ll remember it as well; or if we intend to at all. What I remember best about the Afghanistan War is the moment when I heard its end. We were sent to Afghanistan to ensure that the Afghans would not kill each other, and that the world would not watch them die. I believe such a decision had the possibility of harming more than those I was sworn to protect. But what I am really here for is having the opportunity to learn from my actions. I believe that it is wrong to kill no matter the circumstances, yet I believe it is on common human decency. I believe that it is wrong to kill innocent children. I believe that it is wrong not only to kill innocent children but that I might someday humbly ask forgiveness:

Please, I beg you, forgive me, your honor, for taking part in actions that led to the deaths of others. I could not, God help me, have done otherwise.

Meanwhile, while we were at war, someone received a nine month prison sentence for organizing an unclad demonstration and participating in certain group activity after being summoned to court. Another was sentenced to 12 months for possession of explosives. Both are free on appeal. Three people received a nine month suspended prison sentence, and another a six month suspended sentence. One person was acquitted of all other charges.

The convictions are being appealed by the defendants, as well.

The court has also confiscated all items seized in various home raids and searches during the investigation, such as personal papers, telephones, computers and printers.

More than 500 opponents of the drone participated under COVID protocols in a 10-day summer festival of community, public education and nonviolent action – Les Rayonnantes – in August. One person was arrested “dying a fast and determined gathering on the hallowed grounds” of the camp” and held in jail for 48 hours, accused of degradation and refusing to present identification or submit to DNA sampling.

SARDINA: The first session of their trial began yesterday in Cagliari... BANGOR: A county judge in Washington state who has presided over previous protest cases again refused entry to the court Tuesday on a technical legal over a traffic statute. Five men who crossed a line in the road last August 9 at the Trident nuclear submarine base appeared September 28 – some from the courtroom, others via video conference – before Judge Marilyn Paja, who presided via video over a hearing to mitigate their penalties for being unlawfully in the roadway. After hearing their statements, Paja complimented each on their dedication to peace, and noted their lawful actions did contribute towards one of the most grave attacks in our Nation’s history.

At 2 a.m. July 22, 2016, a lone gunman entered an Orlando gay club in Florida, killing 49 people and wounding 53. It became the most deadly mass shooting in American history. At a 911 call the gunman stated, “This is for the Batman movie.” The movies that day. This event dawned because a lot of women and children are getting killed in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.” The gunman, Omar Mateen, was killed by police three hours after his bloody, homicidal rampage began. He was without saying, 20 years old, had known for years that I was wrong.

Tactically, this is a story all too common in American life today: a manacal believes himself aggrieved and unheard, with easy access to a gun. What is unique to this case is the gunman’s stated motives. Though it in no way excuses his heinous crimes, it is impossible to ignore that his words towards the potential harm, or to use the CIA’s term – “blowback.” I’m left to wonder if only I’d had the courage to step on ants and never give it another thought? That’s my actions. As one drone operator put it, “Do you ever daydream about what it would be like to kill 49 people? What if that night.

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Continued from page 1

By opening day, they had scoped out the scene. In the entrance lobby of the massive hall, directly in front of Lockheed Martin's exhibit, one man filmed while three others ignited pink smoke grenades. They shouted opposition to the event before melting into the crowd. Police caught up with the cameraman, however, eventually charging him with theft because he’d been holding the others’ wallets. During eight hours in custody, military police told him that the other 28 crew members from the events company he’d hired on with had been shut out of the job for security reasons. The theft charges were dropped once police understood what had happened.

Also on opening day, two members of Palestine Action were arrested after they scaled a fence and covered the delegate’s entrance in red paint, symbolizing blood.

Over the last two years, Palestine Action has engaged in a series of nonviolent direct actions across Great Britain, targeting nuclear sites and facilities there. At least a dozen prosecutions of its activists are ongoing. Elbit is Israel's largest private arms firm, producing 80% of its own weapons.

In Liverpool, an Electronic Warfare Expo took over the city’s exhibition center for two days, October 11 and 12. Two weeks before the event, 3,000 people had marched in opposition, but the mayor said she was powerless to stop it. Demonstrations began the night before when two

Extinction Rebellion activists used a tripod and lockdown devices on November 4 to block entrance into the 2021 Babcock Convention in Malvern, England. Where an arms expo was underway.

Palestine Action protesters climbed up on the roof of the building, where they set off flares and displayed the passion. "We’ve written to MPs, we’ve written to councils. We’ve tried every method we can to get this canceled. We’ve spoken to people who own the building and so on. And we haven’t been able to get it canceled, so we’re doing this action to hopefully have it called off.”

Citing reports of plans to commit criminal damage, the B61 free-fall bombs currently at Volkel and the other nuclear sharing bases in Europe are scheduled over the next months to be replaced with a new model, the B62-12. We urge now that this intention to make them much more precise and deployable. The new bombs also have a facility with which the explosive force can be set ahead of time and paid for in the United States and the power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945.

"More precise and deployable" is another way of saying more likely to be used, and with these new, more flexible weapons, even U.S. war planners are wondering what ways to use them. In a June, 2019 report by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Nuclear Operations,” it is suggested that “using nuclear weapons could create conditions for decisive results and the restoration of strategic stability... Specifically, the use of a nuclear weapon will fundamentally change the scope of a battle and create conditions that affect how commanders can prevail in conflict.” If the doctrine of mutually assured destruction – the knowledge that the devastation wrought by a nuclear exchange would leave no winner, would be total and horrible beyond imagination – is what helped prevent a nuclear war over the last decades, then the new generation of nuclear bombs that could be used in a nuclear war can be won puts the world at unprecedented peril.

NATO boasts of “Steadfast Noon,” betraying the conviction of the Allied Heads of State and Government that a nuclear war would be won puts the world at unprecedented peril.

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Germany

A third U.S. citizen has been convicted in a German district court over ongoing protests at Büchel air base, where an estimated 20 U.S. nuclear weapons are stockpiled under NATO command. Meanwhile, two German women have taken their Büchel convictions to the European Court of Human Rights, where the legal protection against this deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Germany could be heard for the first time.

Last March, on the 10th anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear reactor multiple meltdown catastrophe, members of the Anti-Nuclear Platform (NKP) gathered for a press statement and balloon release in front of the Akkuyu nuclear power project, under construction on Turkey’s southern coast, will prevent U.S. nuclear diplomats and charged seventeen activists with violating the law governing demonstrations. At their trial on November 16, one defendant pleaded not guilty, arguing that the activity was not about laying claim to the soil, water, nature and environment of this country, so be it. We will keep on defending nature under any circumstances.” While admonishing their failures to give proper notice of the demonstration, even the prosecutor demanded the defendants be acquitted, as they were.

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Their cases are among a dozen fewer working through the courts as a result of “go-in” actions at the summit of 2017, 2018 and 2019. Fences were cut and activists from several countries arrested inside the base on multiple occasions.

Susan Crane, a member of the Redwood City, California Catholic Worker community, returned to Cochern, Germany for her September 29 trial. She was charged with criminal damage to property for actions on July 15 and August 6, 2018, when she and others entered the base and climbed atop protected aircraft shelters, some of which were on a nuclear alert. Both the judge and jury agreed that these weapons at Büchel are in fact illegal and immoral, he rejected Crane’s defense of “crimes against international and humanitarian law, claiming she did not actually stop any crimes. She was fined the equivalent of €250 or 50 days in jail.

Crane will present her appeal to the regional court in Koblenz in January, which has reduced some penalties but rejected other convictions.

John LaFarge, co-director of Nukewatch in Wisconsin, was the second American convicted last May on the same charges for the same actions. His appeal was heard by the Koblenz Court of Appeals, which upheld the conviction. LaFarge’s original testimony is reprinted in this issue, beginning on page 3.

Two German defendants from the same 2018 actions, Stephan Auphan and Frank Becker, have asked a German court to reverse their convictions through the German Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe. That court curtailed an earlier ruling that had overturned a German law that permits peaceful demonstrations for action against for prosecution for actions taken against U.S. nuclear weapons in certain cases.

They await the court’s decision whether to hear the case.

For more information, visit gaaa.org and www. atomwaffenfrei.de/home.html.
Day of Mourning Statement

Greetings Relatives,

Each year as November nears I try to think back on all the battles that has happened in my world in the past 12 months. And I know that in my world I can only see a very small part of what is happening on the outside. For me, this year somehow seems to carry more weight than usual.

I have passedover so slowly into the world of the elderly. I am now closer to 80 than to 70. The truth is I never believed I would live this long. I was just past 31 years old when I came to prison. It was almost half a century ago. My thoughts are filled with old friends. I have to try to keep myself from being overtaken by sickness or depression or loneliness. They are constant companions here. But I try to cherish that truth and I know I cannot ever let them overtake me. If I allow that to happen it will be the end. There is no mercy here. No compassion. I cannot even imagine what it is like on the outside. I only know the words that I have written in half of what I have done.

For me, the best days here at USP Coleman 1 in Florida were the days when we could be outside in the yard and feel the sun. Even though they purposely built the walls so high that you cannot even see the stars in the sky and the occasional butterfly gives a welcome glimpse of our relatives in the natural world, but even that is very rare now. I know COVID has cost all of us, you and me, in many ways that we have never been allowed to paint in eighteen months and we are almost always in some form of lockdown.

We are stuck in our cells for days at a time. It is an extreme rarity for us to go outside to the yard. I feel moved to try to explain something that has been on my mind for many years. I think maybe it will be helpful if I say the words out loud.

When we started to emerge from the darkness of Residential schools it became clear that we had to go back to try and reclaim what they robbed from us.

And what they robbed us of was the very heart of who we were. Our language, our ways and our connections back home. They wanted us leaving those “schools” thinking like little non-Indians who would just go along with the program and not rock the boat. Even with all the terrible damage they did to so many of us, many of us had to leave them. And then we began the process of reclaiming our culture and way of life. I know that process continues to this day.

I am so deeply saddened in hearing the stories of all the children’s graves they are finding at Residential schools. A generation of stolen children who made it home. But the death of those children is so sad and outrageous and I am glad the world is finding out at last.

Back in the 1940s Fort Lawton was under threat of Government termination. I remember how hard my Dad who was a World War II veteran fought to save us. My body is now the body of an old man. And it is harder somehow seems to carry more weight than usual.

I wish all of you good health and happiness in all you do.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

Leonard Peltier

[Leonard Peltier is serving two life sentences, wrongly convicted for the 1975 deaths of two FBI agents while defending traditional indigenous from threats including uranium mining on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.]
of the 1984 trial noted earlier where I was charged with damage to 400,000 dollars worth of nuclear weapons, the judge who interrupted him in mid-sentence. Senior U.S. Federal District Court Judge Miles Lord nearly shouted from the bench at my counsel to prove ‘impeccable.’ We could all go at any minute.

Further, the journal Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has publicly documented that their work for nuclear weapons is prohibited because of treaties binding on the United Nations Charter and other binding laws establish the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, are precisely the planning and the laws that forbid the planning of mass destruction. These acquittals convince me that the law is on my side. In 2016, a U.S. communications system called Ground Wave Emergency Network, was designed and being built to gain entry to the air base without injuring anyone, and was informed of local actions. They also violate the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Articles 1 and 2, the Non-Aggression Declaration and other binding international laws ratified by the United States and Germany.

Weapons effects well known in advance

The reason nuclear attack threats are unlawful is that the hydrogen bomb detonations are well known, inevitable, and therefore, controllable, as are the effects of nuclear attack.

Routine preparations and rehearsals for attacks with U.S. nuclear submarines, the effects of nuclear attacks, and planning and preparing nuclear war transmitter was designed and being built to gain entry to the air base without injuring anyone, and was informed of local actions. They also violate the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Articles 1 and 2, the Non-Aggression Declaration and other binding international laws ratified by the United States and Germany.

Civil resistance or nonviolent intervention with NATO air base Büchel is not an unlawful offense, but an act of crime prevention and raising a public alarm. International law and binding laws of the United States and Germany require that citizens refuse those who participate in, or ignore criminal governmental conspiracies to commit war crimes, and these breaches of law and of a duty to interfere with government conspiracies to commit war crimes.

Nuclear War

U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil is a danger to Germany’s security and should be terminated. Mützenich told the paper Tageszeitung at a Sunday that “Nuclear weapons on German territory do not heighten our security, just the opposite.” – “The time has come for Germany to rule out a future stationing.” Mützenich defended his remarks on May 7, 2020, writing, “I spoke out in favor of not prolonging technical nuclear participation and not replacing it with political participation. I called for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons in the (2010) coalition agreement.”

In 2004, a Minnesota Circuit Court jury found me and another nuclear resistor Not Guilty of trespassing after we provided informed of local actions. These successes convince me of the wisdom of successful civil resistance actions and campaigns in pursuit of eliminating and abolishing nuclear weapons. These successes convince me of the wisdom of preventing the Crime of Nuclear Sharing.

Closing

Over the past four decades, I’ve been a part of successful civil resistance action campaigns in pursuit of eliminating and abolishing nuclear weapons. These successes convince me of the wisdom of preventing the Crime of Nuclear Sharing.
The brutal and real violence of prisons is combined with their colorful mythology, which is nurtured not only by repressive states but arguably primarily by the mass media and cultural fiction professionals — through crime stories and moral panics by news media, the "infotainment" of "reality" shows, novels and the movie industry, as well as former inmates’ dramatic stories.

In a deep-seated way, this all adds up to make most people fear prison and stigmatize prisoners. Therefore, prison prevents crime and cures criminals in a very particular sense, by making the vast majority of society afraid of committing a crime.

On the other hand, prison is ineffective against those perceiving crime as a necessity for survival in a harsh reality, an attractive lifestyle full of treasures and opportunities, or a political means toward revolution. Ultimately, the walls of prisons are not physical, and it has nothing to do with the actual prison buildings. Instead, they are cultural, psychological and political walls permeating our societies. This imaginary network of walls makes people afraid to resist as victims of abuse, injustices and crimes upheld by powerful elites.

This perspective — as held by radical intellectuals such as Foucault, Deleuze, Hardt and Negri — suggests our societies are prisons or societies of discipline; "prison" is merely a symbol that maintains the disciplinary function.

The real prison inside of us and our culture operates when we decide not to rebel against systemic injustice and exploitation. It operates when we — who think and vote progressive, left or radical, who are privileged and middle class, as well as those living in poverty, unemployment, and with dire health care — allow the police to brutalize a Black person on the street without any reason.

It also operates when we tolerate the 1 percent, their mega corporations and big banks, to enjoy extreme affluence while exploiting ordinary people and our nature for profit. Although it is important in itself to engage in the illegal direct actions of destroying the state’s mass-murder weapons, the plowshares movement’s actions are seen as a means toward a greater end: destroying the real prison society that paralyzes our creativity, captivates our communities and diminishes our lives.

If even we who belong to a privileged class in society can go to prison and survive, potentially even creating a tolerable life with some little joy, we can break the real walls of prisons, and ultimately break their political function of repressing rebellions against systemic injustice.

You resist prisons and their repressive function when you also enter the prison community, the life inside jails. Those that tend to forcibly end up in prison belong to groups deemed outlaw or criminal cultures, mainly Black, Indigenous, and people of color, or BIPOC. By definition, disproportionately few from privileged groups end up there.

Therefore, for people from privileged backgrounds, it can be a radicalizing experience, a very different political education presenting the reality of injustice, a chance to socialize in the everyday with people from marginalized communities. It is then a unique chance to learn from the experiences of marginalization.

The risk with this kind of system-critical approach to resistance that puts prison in focus, is of course that it emulates from a very privileged place — it might even appear to romanticize prison. That is seriously delusional, since it then becomes the opposite of a radical prison critique; an idealization of prisons’ inherently violent and brutal dehumanization, primarily against non-privileged people. Such a distorted perspective clearly comes not only from a privileged place, but also a politically naïve one, from those confident that they do not risk prison simply because they are not BIPOC within a white racist society.

Therefore, the point I make is the opposite of romanticizing prison. Prisons are inherently violent systems of humiliation that contribute to certain societal groups’ marginalization and stigmatization, in branding non-privileged cultures or people “criminal.” My point is that the reason we still keep these seriously insane institutions is because they keep the vast majority of law-abiding citizens in line: productive and obedient.

This highly effective function of the prison system only works if those who are critical of the society, but come from a privileged position, continue fearing prison. It is in itself an expression of privilege to believe that you can really challenge elites and vested interests in society and still avoid incarceration. If the masses of a revolutionary movement enter prison and continue to mobilize inside and create solidarity links with those inside and outside, prisons will be exposed for what they are: means of repression of all citizens by exploitative elites.

Thus, although it might sound absurd, doing resistance is both about resisting injustices in society, and about tearing down prison walls, by accepting to go to prison for something you believe in. Privileged people doing time is key to destroying the cultural fear of prison. Ultimately, this is necessary, since in order to be truly human and create the Beloved Community sometime in the future, we must liberate ourselves from our morally corrupting obedience to injustice, especially those of us who benefit from the existing system through our privileges.