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The Censorship of Ideas is a Form of Psychological Warfare

A Message from the Diversionary Treatment Unit

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Hybachi LeMar speaks from SCI Huntingdon, contributing to the *Midwest Censorship Update 2025* zine.

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In *The Palestinian Prisoner's Movement: A History*, it's written that "the primacy of the liberation of prisoners as a collective goal of the Palestinian resistance is also emergent from the unity of imprisonment as a place of militant development, training, and socialization".

It teaches of the universality of imprisonment as a weapon of warfare, and occupation, and that whenever there is occupation, there is rebellion, and that even the most brutal forms of imprisonment can themselves become schools of revolt.

In "Black Anarchism and the Black Radical Tradition", Atticus Bagby-Williams and Nsambu Za Suekama articulates that "black anarchist politics reside within a cultural oral tradition". Letters from jail and from exiled revolutionaries and self-published literature in the form of zines, primarily because many initial black anarchist intellectuals emerge from prison struggles.

Brother Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin points out that these materials are weapons against fascism, illiteracy, self-hatred, and lack of self-esteem. Printing and sharing these ideas revolutionary enough to subvert these interlocking oppressions are an essential means of our psychological self-defense.

Defense against kick-backs, coverups; of mice that eat through ramen noodle packets, of chipped-walls, peeling ceilings, roaches, no cell windows or air conditioning; slave labor, periodic denials of suicides. We're in a violation of freedom of press: it takes maneuvering under radar, under the censors, ideological – [this is a call from Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution Huntingdon. This call is subject to recording and monitoring]

Not a single lifer I spoke with where I'm confined was aware of the 2016 nor 2011 country-wide prison strike: a political form of protest – largely due to targeted newspapers denied to them by mailroom officials.

What helped me get through while in the hole? Self-discipline, meditation, and the application of knowledge. A healthy vibe of: do pushups and study. Do sit ups and study. Do dips off the side of the toilet and recall what I've learned while pacing the cell.

Robin D.G. Kelly acknowledged the way Robert F. Williams insisted that “all young black activists undergo personal and moral transformation”. It was a familiar lesson embodied in the lives of Malcolm X and later George Jackson, the idea that one possesses the revolutionary will to transform one's self.

Government attacks on newspapers and books have played a particularly violent role in South Africa during apartheid. For example, as early as the 1950s, it was behind the repression of union papers like Morning Star; and in the 80s, on books like “Biko”, on the South African Bantu revolutionary who was banned from being communicated with while in public as well as his teachings before his torture and execution.

The power of print can also be felt in Rojava. Before 2011, when North and East Syria was pregnant with revolution, we saw several similar circumstances: labor pains, miscarriages of justice, society saturated with corruption and nepotism; surveillance and censorship everywhere. These very conditions, however, spawn a species of thinkers who evolved, who brood over books, whose diet consists of ideas, who find themselves stirring, mutating, in the reservoir of the repressed social imagination.

Before his assassination August 21, 1971, general and field marshal in the Black Panther Party George Jackson spoke of his revolutionary awakening, of his transformation. While in San Quentin he wrote “I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels and Mao; and they redeemed me.”

And from an isolated cell on İmralı Island, Abdullah Ocalan – the now-renowned revolutionary of the Kurdish freedom movement – became exposed to the social ecology writings of anarchist Murray Bookchin. He cross-bred Bookchin’s ideas with his own principles of self-determination, which assisted dynamically in hatching the Rojava revolution.

Ocalan analyzed how our ecological crisis is a symptom of human hierarchy and domination. And with this diagnosis, directly inspired the democratic autonomous administration of North and East Syria DAANES with a radically feminist revolutionary prescription of direct democracy against the state.

The force of censorship has failed to repress the resurrecting powers of Black consciousness our martyr Steve Bantu Biko gave rise to; nor did it stop General George’s message in blood from making it clear to the American government that if it continues to kill us, then there will be funerals on both sides.

In the final analysis, the censorship of ideas is a form of psychological warfare. The state might ban our books, they may dispose of our bodies, but they fail to annihilate our ideas.

Our beloved compa Casey says “forward ever; forever forward.” It’s practically scientific: the more the repressive hands of state forces struggle to hold us back, only catapults us further into the expanding arms of the revolution.