

TWO WEEKS INTO THE NATIONAL PRISON Strike and history has already been made. Even in the face of massive repression, preemptive lock downs, and the targeting of suspected strike leaders and organizers, currently we know about strike actions happening in at least 16 states across the U.S.—with more news smuggled out of the prisons everyday.

Despite the State's best efforts to clamp down on resistance, prisoners have still been able to send out clandestine messages from behind enemy lines in order to coordinate collective acts of refusal such as striking at their jobs, boycotting the canteen or commissary, hunger striking, organizing demonstrations, and getting word out to media and supporters. Such actions have taken place across racial, religious, and gang lines—presenting the prisoners demands as a class, while at the same time, recognizing the need to destroy and abolish prisons as part of a neo-colonial and white supremacist power structure.

Against all odds, the strike spilled across borders and into Canadian prisons, with inmates in Nova Scotia taking part in the strike and issuing their own demands, while the strike also spread to detainees inside the Northwest (ICE) Detention Facility in Tacoma, Washington, building on solidarity statements issued between prison rebels and detained immigrants.

On the outside, a growing collection of community organizations, and revolutionary networks have taken to the streets to support the strike, organized call-in campaigns that have shut down offices, brought together masses of people for letter writing

nights and teach-ins, and demonstrated outside of prisons to the applause and raised fists of those inside.

In the wake of the launch of the strike, which centers on demands to address basic needs, freedoms, and programs as well as the end of prison slavery under the 13th amendment, the culture has clearly shifted. There is now a discussion about prisoners and prison slavery like never before. In the end however, the real victories of the strike so far have been the relationships built leading up to and during the strike, those that reach across the prison bars and outside; which call for the coming together of people regardless of color towards a common goal—and against a common threat.

If the past two years have shown us anything, it's that our relationships in our communities, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and prisons—and how we come together to fight shared conditions—is not only our single means of self-defense, but also our only hope of creating a different way of life.

Society and the states which seek to manage it face grave challenges in the face of escalating wealth inequality, mounting economic crisis, and the threat of ecological collapse. Across the world, fascism and populist nationalism are presented as an “alternative” to the pitfalls of decades of neoliberalism which have only accelerated these trends. In the United States, neoliberalism has meant the constant reaffirmation of racial slavery and the shifting of traditional sites of production into prisons.

On one hand this shows that the “civil war never ended,” but moreover the true nature of the “devil's bargain” of white supremacy. For those that support

calls for “law and order” and an end to basic social programs, might have seen their former jobs moved into the hands of prisoners who work for free or for pennies. This type of talk is not hyperbole – starting in the 1990s for instance, AT&T dumped thousands of union workers only to turn around and fill their jobs with prisoners.

This is simply one example among many, but the point is clear: while both corporate parties pumped up fear of immigrants and the Black poor, it was the prison system, not migrant workers, who were actually taking jobs. This reality will only be accelerated in the coming years, as the gig economy and automation will leave huge sections of the workforce without access to work or more likely, enough wages to live on. *But hey, there's always prison!*

Thus, the current prison strike should be seen as a multi-faceted strike and an attack on the system of racialized capital as a whole; with everyone that is supporting or taking part in the strike playing a part: from those dropping banners, to those striking inside the prison walls. In this spirit, we see this activity akin to those that participated in the Underground Railroad in a variety of capacities, Native, Black, and white indentured servants who found freedom in Maroon societies outside of civilization, and a rebellious collection of poor farmers who deserted the Confederate army, and the masses of Black people who collectively took part in a general strike while fleeing their plantations, crippling the Confederacy.

With that in mind, let's peer through the razor wire fences to see what went down during the first two weeks of the prison strike.

LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELD VICTORY TO THE STRIKERS!

NEWS FROM THE PRISON STRIKE

- New Mexico prisoners in three units launch a strike early, “due to administration cutting family visits, harassing families, strip searching elder family members, and STIU targeting, harassing, and abusing inmates.” The entire NM system is put on lockdown. Prisoners go on strike in Alabama on August 21st, according to an Al-Jazeera interview with Swift Justice.
- Canadian prisoners in Nova Scotia declare a solidarity strike on August 19th saying “We, the prisoners of Burnside, have united to fight for change. We are unified across the population in non-violent, peaceful protest. We are calling for support from the outside in solidarity with us. We believe that it is only through collective action that change will be made.”
- Detainees at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA join the prison strike.
- Inmates at Federal Prisons in Kentucky, South Carolina, and Colorado boycott the canteen and some meals in solidarity with the national strike. Prisoners in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan are boycotting the private phone vendor, GTL.

- Prisoners at Sterling Correction Facility launch a hunger strike in Colorado beginning in early August. Prisoners at New Folsom, California as well as in Arizona, Texas, and Ohio declare hunger strikes in conjunction with the launch of the national movement. A hunger strike with its own demands breaks out at Wabash Valley in Indiana on August 27th. Prisoners in Vaughn, Delaware begin a hunger strike on September 1st and prisoners in Westville, Indiana do the same on September 4th.
- Strike activity in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, all southern states with a recent history of mass prisoner protests, starting with the 2010 state-wide strike in Georgia.
- Prisoners at Lee Correctional in South Carolina are still facing repression after the deadly April riots, but are refusing to shop in the commissary.
- Prisoners at Bowling Green in Missouri organize a demonstration inside.
- Prisoners in Larissa, Greece hang a banner and issue a statement in solidarity with U.S. prisoners.

Prisoners' demands, more information, and steps you can take in solidarity with prisoners:

PRISONSTRIKE.COM

INCARCERATEDWORKERS.ORG

ITSGOINGDOWN.ORG/PRISONSTRIKE