

# Tearing Down The Prisons

## A Vision of a Prison-less Future

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*Fifth Estate note:* The following text was sent to us anonymously via email. It contained a section following what is here describing an intense prison rebellion at an unnamed institution and without a date of its occurrence.

Although the uprising report was exciting, we had no way to check its authenticity, plus we knew its inclusion would guarantee that our prison subscribers would be denied this edition.

We decided to print the essay section below and the rebellion section on our web site at [FifthEstate.org](http://FifthEstate.org).

Artificial borders that define nation-states are typically characterized by fences and walls and perhaps even by check-points, creating a separation between one portion of geography and another, between one population and another—through force. But even within those established nation-states, there exist fences and walls and check-points that form artificial borders, separating internal prison colonies from the so-called free world, separating those accused of dangerous deviations from those who are ostensibly compliant and obedient.

### **Prison Fence As Border**

Prison fences constitute borders, imposed separations, essential for the continuation of systems of control. In many respects, the fences that surround the prisons are far more important to the post-industrial police state's survival than the fences along the national borders. The elimination of prison fences, and thereby the elimination of prisons, would mean the elimination of authority's capacity to punish. In the absence of an enforced capacity to punish, there is the absence of law and the absence then of the State itself.

The state is violence. The state is force. Take away the capacity to punish, to impose force and violence internally, the state loses all power to impose itself, to enforce its edicts. So, when speaking of the quickest and most-effective method for destroying nation-states, the essential fences to tear down are the ones surrounding the prisons. Without those fences, all bets are off

### **The Case Against Prisons, Just In Case You Need One**

The modern incarnation of the prison complex that confronts us in the U.S. emerged from the state response to the 1960s liberation movements. As oppressed populations confronted oppression and empire, the government employed a strategy for using its courts and prisons as weapons against individuals and populations posing challenges to state power. Widespread criminalization and prison construction provided the emerging "soft" police

state with the capacity to eliminate and neutralize potential opponents under the guise of crime control, zero tolerance, and war on drugs.

The consequent colonies of cages, presented as a solution to a largely non-existent problem, the “epidemic of crime,” served the ulterior aims of political, social, and racial engineering. The prison colonies held the poor, the ethnic minorities, those most inclined to support liberal or radical—or even worse!—an insurrectionary agenda. The colony of cages slowed the population growth of troublesome populations.

Prisons are not a response to crime, but vice-versa the creation of prison colonies fuels the criminalization industry, the passage of more laws, the hiring of more police. In the absence of resources that are diverted from schools and communities, squandered on the prisons, poverty creates desperate, surplus populations to be harvested and imprisoned. Thus, the building of prisons and the availability of empty bunks serve as powerful economic forces that lead to filling those prisons and bunks.

In the process, those most assertive in confronting the injustice of the state, most inclined to see themselves above it rather than seeing it above them, are most vulnerable to imprisonment; those who would otherwise set the campuses ablaze or lead the strike at the factory are now pacing the prison yard, segregated from a world cleansed of its disruptive influences.

Radicals who did not get the memo, face mind-numbing and bewildering sentences for not maintaining their assigned seats in the larger program. By this strategy, the police state does not just neutralize a single anti-racist or environmental activist or revolutionary, but seeks to deter the hundreds or thousands of others who are thinking about resisting. For prospective rebels who still don't get the memo, there's an empty bunk in the basement cell of America's mega-max prisons.

These prison colonies, self-contained populations isolated from the outside world, are the perfect Petri dishes for the social engineers to employ new and experimental programs for crowd control, for social and psychological modification. The strategies that prove successful are then exported to the so-called free world. In this way, prisoner populations are canaries in the proverbial coal mine of the social engineers.

The police response to the 2011 Occupy movement, for example, was not unfamiliar to any prisoner watching events on television from their prison cell. Pepper spray, water cannons, rubber bullets, attack dogs, special response teams clad in body armor and helmets behind riot shields, billy clubs, kettling, isolation of leaders, marking subjects through the use of paintball guns for later apprehension, use of surveillance footage for prosecution.

All of these tactics were perfected in prison yards across the country and modified time and again before being employed in the streets. When the police state does not bring you to the prison yard, it still brings the prison yard to you.

All of this occurs in the context of the prison system serving as an economic space for super-exploitation. Beyond acting as a valve on the economy to control the numbers of unemployables in the population, prisons also contain prison factories on both the state and federal levels to outsource prisoner populations as slave labor to corporations seeking cheap labor and little to no environmental or workplace regulations. While NAFTA led to the export of jobs to Mexico, some of those union jobs were exported to internal prison colonies where desperate prisoners perform the same labor formerly performed by union workers.

Corporations now pay minimum wage for each prisoner and save millions in production costs while the state, in turn, pockets the majority of the pay and diverts it to the prison budget, while the prisoners slave away for literally pennies a day. As a consequence, former union workers find themselves sleeping in their cars, desperate and criminalized, destined to get locked up to resume what used to be a union-scale job.

In the process, the obscenely wealthy at the top of the global-crapitalist pyramid scheme accumulate even more wealth and power. At the other end of the spectrum, prisons produce broken, domesticated workers who know their place in the sweatshop scheme, becoming valuable to the super-exploitation process and distorting the entire economy to the benefit of the rich and privileged few.

This is the nightmare scenario that confronts and threatens all of us enslaved to the larger machinery of the corporate control state.



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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/396-summer-2016/tearing-down-the-prisons>  
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