operating system on my phone' or 'I dropped my phone in a pool and had to get a new phone.' That's usually the reason for a safety number changing, but definitely what you want to do is find a different way to ask that, other than using Signal and ideally other than using the phone. Especially if we are worried about cloned phones. Because if you just use a normal SMS text message to send your friend and your phone has been cloned, then it could be the cops responding saying 'Oh, yeah I had to get a new phone'.

BOG: I've seen some people do a thing where they ask someone in a group, when their safety number changed, 'Hey could you leave a voice memo with your name and current time that you're recording the memo and send it into the loop?' And that way everyone hears this person's voice, and it's the time when they specifically get asked to record the memo as it's outside of Enemy-Of-The-State-level NSA level operation that's probably not somebody compiling an automated voice message in that person's voice.

CB: Yeah, that's a pretty good method for doing that. As you point out, synthesizing peoples' voices can be done, but taking into account what your threat level is – are you someone who they're going to be throwing everything at and be able to synthesize your voice in a very short time? For the protest movements we've seen, probably not. However if you are the leader of a protest group, hmm... If you are someone that they're really going to be going after because they think that going after this one person will completely destroy the movement – which I don't think is the kind of movement that we are in right now which is good, to avoid those specific people who could really destroy a movement – that's a pretty good method.

BOG: If you could speak to that prior scenario, is that actually copying the contents of a phone? I think that was the subject of the recent article by Upturn called Mass Extraction –

CB: That's right.

BOG: If you could talk a little bit about what the findings were there. I was kind of surprised yet kind of not surprised to see the local law enforcement here in Asheville spent at least $19,000, according to their studies, on cell phone extraction tools. But what are mobile device forensic tools, and what do you know about them, how widespread and what kind of stuff do they do?

CB: So these things have existed for a long time. We've been talking about them at CLDC for a long time but this Upturn report is really wonderful for just as you say, how widespread they are. Small police departments have them, medium police departments spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on access to this over the course of 5 years, and some of the capabilities were actually, I suppose, not really surprising. But reading them all in one place and knowing how low cost access to that technology is was sobering.

So these cell phone extraction devices, they come in different forms but the kind that is most popularly seen is a small stand alone device that you plug a cell phone into and that stand alone device either tries to break into that phone if it's locked or otherwise just copies all of the content of that phone for later analysis. Some of the things that were surprising to me was how much was available even when the phone was locked and encrypted. There's a lot of data that is existing in an unencrypted form on your phone.

For example say your phone is locked, you receive a phone call and the name of your contact still shows up, right? It's not the name that your contact is sending you, its not metadata associated with that contact. If your mother is calling you, it probably shows up "Mom" in your phone, and the reason it says that is because your address book has an entry with that phone number and the name "Mom" attached to it. So your address book entries are existing in an unencrypted state, for example.

Some of the other things that were sort of surprising that were pointed out, that exist in this unencrypted state even though your phone was in a locked condition, were Telegram files and Discord files, and files associated with Google mail. I think a lot of this stuff could just be from bad decisions that the app developer made. Like Telegram is not necessarily focused on security, and so for convenience or speed they may just not be hiding that information behind the device encryption.

There was definitely some reporting in that Upturn report about being able to brute force guess passwords and so there are some things that you can do to protect yourself from that, which is to have a long enough password. Or if you have an Apple device you can enable your phone to self-wipe if you have 10 incorrect guesses, for example. Which if you have a small child at home maybe you don't want to do because I almost guarantee you will end up with a wiped phone by the end of the week.

BOG: With encrypted files, if there are messages or what-have-you that are saved in an encrypted section on the phone would that just get copied and saved, and tested against decryption later? Is that the idea?

CB: I think what's happening in most cases is they're taking a copy of encrypted information, possibly in the hope that they could decrypt it later. I am not the hope that they would be able to get the unlock password from you by other means, like a court order for example. You know, they did point to instances where they were still able to bypass security features like encryption because of security flaws, which is very common. If your phone is badly out of date and you haven't been keeping up with installing security updates, always install your security updates. That's a common thing in computer security, that there are flaws that can be taken advantage of that can allow bad actors to break through otherwise strong encryption. But I think if you're keeping an up-to-date phone, I think that's the best that any of us can do.
Another point that was interesting in the article, and I'm glad that they pointed it out, was the sort of instance when this is being applied to people. You hear about Apple being pressed to give up encrypted information or give a back door when there's a mass shooting, or a sort of incident that may involve multiple conspirators and the loss of life — something very serious. But in the_Update_ article they talk about how through their research and requesting of records it showed that a lot of law enforcement agencies, even local law enforcement agencies, are attempting either to pressure people whose devices they get a hold of or apply for warrants to copy peoples' contents of their phones for minor things that they're being accused of.

Like if it is something like shoplifting or graffiti or public intoxication, petty drug charges, sex work; these are a few of the examples that they give. Considering the way that policing works in the United States, and this shouldn't surprise anyone in the listening audience, police tend to focus their attention on poor and racialized parts of the population. So if law enforcement gets people's data, whether by asking for it and pressuring people into it by using devices, and then saves it for a later investigation and there's no sort of oversight of this, it seems very likely that the sorts of data that they're collecting could be used to build future cases or for building profiles on people for things they haven't actually been accused of so far.

CB: Yup. Phishing for data. Maybe they're just trying to justify the purchase of this stuff. In Oregon they spend half a million dollars on cellphone extraction technologies, Portland alone spent a quarter of a million in a period of 4-5 years. That's a lot of money to justify, right? If you're only using it 3 times a year for homicide cases then maybe you can't justify actually spending that money and you would just farm out, whenever you do need it for something like that, either to a fusion center or a pay-per-service from one of these companies. So it might just be they're partially covering their asses and saying 'Oh yeah, we use it 10 times a week'.

But we've also seen examples of law enforcement agencies that just collect so much data, almost for the purpose of just having data. The LAPD famously uses Palantir which is a horrible company, to do all sorts of data analytics for their region collecting data on pizza purchases and parking passes and all sorts of things that don't seem relevant at all to law enforcement, but it's almost a compulsion to just collect the data and see what they can do with it.

CB: Yeah, so keyword warrants. I hadn't heard about them before this news story came out earlier this month, but it's not surprising. I certainly was familiar with just how many requests for data Google gets and responds to, affecting hundreds of thousands of user accounts every year in the US. So it wouldn't surprise me if Google, instead of just getting requests saying 'Hey, I'd like to have all of the emails associated with email address thefinalstraw@gmail.com', which seems to be the more straightforward type of request related to a specific account that might be included in a law enforcement issue... probably not though. To expand that to 'Hey, I want to know all of the information you have about people who searched for 'The Final Straw'. So that's the keyword warrant or the keyword search request that happened in this case. We've seen examples of Geofencing warrants.

cloning of the network ID or SIM connection could be done. It would be similar to you getting a new phone but having the same number, and that if Signal was installed on that device and it was connecting to the same phone number, by a Man in the Middle attack via a cloned SIM, it would appear that the interception could still be happening but that everyone would see a notation that there had been a change in safety number. Is that maybe what would happen?

CB: Yes. That is perfectly said. Right, so for them to be able to both clone your phone and intercept messages without those "safety number has changed" messages happening would be very, very difficult. So yeah, certainly if there are reports of anybody who's had a confiscated phone and then all of a sudden all of their contacts are noticing that their safety number has changed with them, that would be super interesting to find out... --

BOG: --Or they stopped getting messages.

CB: Also horrifying.

*Laughter

BOG: Yeah. You know, they noticed that they stopped getting messages, everyone notices that the safety number changed, then that means that hypothetically the cloned phone or whatever would now be in those chats.

CB: So I don't know if it's as simple as that, because when you add a new device on Signal all the other devices get a notification of that.

BOG: Oh I see. So if I had a desktop and at least one cell phone that was getting messages... Yeah, but if that device was no longer getting new messages because the traffic was being routed to a different device, you wouldn't like -

CB: Right so, your contacts should at the very least get the notification saying that the safety number has changed. If it's a remote clone I think the only way in which the cloned phone would be able to read the messages in preexisting groups, for example, would be if the device was physically confiscated and copied. Because there are encryption keys that are used to start those conversations which are needed.

BOG: Do you mean the messages that were in loops before?

CB: No, to continue to receive messages from conversations that had already been going on. If someone started a new conversation after the cloning then the other people in the conversation might not be able to notice, but if you were continuing a conversation that had started before the cloning I don't think you would be able to get that information without having physical access to the device and being able to copy over the encryption keys that were used to start those conversations.

BOG: Because they're being stored on the phone and not on the server.

CB: That's right, yeah. So for example, when you add a new Signal device part of what happens is copying over the encryption keys needed to continue conversations. And there's a QR code that, say if you have Signal on your phone and you start using Signal on your desktop, you link those 2 devices so that both devices are able to receive and decrypt messages that go to you as an identifier.

BOG: If you know that if someone in your group or one of your friends has changed their number, what's a good verification?

CB: Don't message them on Signal, and ask them, right? Because who knows who's answering, Try to find a different form of communication even if it's via friend or via a regular phone call, but ideally via email or some other band that is unrelated to your phone would be perfect to ask them, 'Hey, I noticed your Signal security number's changed, what went on?' Most of the time, or every time this has happened to me, the answer's been 'Oh, I had to reinstall my
and possibly making a new cell phone that behaves just like your cell phone. So it would allow them to intercept calls possibly receive messages that you were intended to receive.

The scarier version but probably lost likely, is the ability for them to be able to do the same thing without having the need to confiscate your phone to do so. That feels unlikely to me that they were doing that. If it was some sort of remote cloning I would gather that they were just cloning the sort of network ID of your phone, and not the contents of your phone. This would allow them to do things like intercept calls, and intercept data, but in both scenarios I think end-to-end encryption (E2E) apps that you use like Signal or Keybase or Wire, that enable E2E encryption, I think the messages you're receiving there would still be safe and that the cloned device shouldn't be able to have the keys enabled to decrypt those messages that were

intended for you. And even traffic that is encrypted — if you are visiting a website on your phone that your accessing via HTTPS, where the S stands for Secure — I think that even they wouldn't be able to see the contents of that web page either because there is a key exchange that happens between you and the web server that they would have to play man in the middle on. Which is more complicated to do in a way that you wouldn't be able to tell that something was going wrong.

All that's to say, it's still scary and I think if you have poor encryption practices like keeping your phone in an unlocked form, they have access to all of your encryption keys for things like Signal and Keybase and whatever other secure messaging you might be using. You should do whatever you need to do to alert everyone you contact with to delete your contact from their messages, groups, and so on. And if you have a phone that is confiscated — and certainly in an unlocked form — I would not trust that phone again. If your phone is confiscated but it was locked at the time and presumably you have a good password so they can't easily unlock your phone, I would still maybe do a factory reset of your phone and start fresh by installing everything over again.

BOG: So, I'm not sure what the basis of this is, but conversations that I was having with friends when we were talking about the latter of the two instances that you were talking about — the hypothetical that remotely the happening for Google Maps asking for anybody who has searched for an address within a given region, that there were a few stories about over the last year. So yeah of course, the data is there why not ask for it? Google is not going to say no, why would they?

BOG: Basically, again by collecting information based on its availability then attempting to apply it. So in this case with the arson, they asked for people who had searched for the address of the house where a car got set on fire within a certain period of time and then cross-referenced that to a Geofence of what phones were in the area within a period of time, and were able to pinpoint and place charges. And not all of the information came out from that, some of the court records are still sealed. It's kind of a frightening application of technology and as you say, a very happy-nibbling industry.

CB: Yeah, I think the potential for false arrests and harassment of people, like say you happen to find someone in that area who you don't like for one reason or another you can arrest them and hold them for a while even if you have no evidence.

Harassment arrests are used all the time by law enforcement and have been for decades, centuries probably.

BOG: So I guess... use DuckDuckGo if you're going to be committing an...? *Laughter*

CB: I would avoid Google, I definitely use DuckDuckGo. I prefer DuckDuckGo for selfish reasons, I find the personalized search aspect of Google to be somewhat irritating. When I search for something I don't want to find what Google thinks I want to find, I want to find the documents related to my search. It's hard to avoid these tools, but I think DuckDuckGo, anything but g-mail for email please, and there are alternatives to Google Docs as well. Crypto pad seems to be getting better. Every month there are improvements. It offers collaborative online editing to documents, all E2E encrypted.

BOG: I am going to presume with this question that you are not a lawyer, am I correct in that?

CB: I am not a lawyer, no.

BOG: It seems things like intercepting phone calls, peoples text messages, or getting deep into their cellphones and all of the information that's collected in them for arguably unrelated topics, might overstep into the realm of FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act), or might overstep into the realm of one of those amendments that protects our rights against unfair search and seizure. That just doesn't seem to be the case? Or in these instances is it that these methods haven't been brought before courts to be challenged?

CB: Everything I know about the law I learned from CLDC, and Law & Order in a previous lifetime. So what I do know about these from reading various news articles and conversations with CLDC is, as pointed out by Upturn, a lot of the extraction of data from cellphones was based on consent and not a warrant. It was about a 50/50 split depending on jurisdiction. So this was probably the case of intimidation by a cop to a person with a cellphone, to say 'Oh, well let us check your cellphone'. I'm not sure if they give full disclosure of what they mean by 'let me check your cellphone', right? (laughs) 'Let me copy everything there is on your cellphone off your cellphone, if
BOG: You can write to Sean Swain at his latest address at:
Sean Swain #2015638
Buckingham Correctional
PO Box 340
Dibyn, Virginia 23936

You can find his past writings, recordings of his audio segments, and updates on his case at seanswain.org. Or now follow him on twitter, @swainrocks.

BOG: So I’m speaking with Cora Borradaile who is on the advisory board of the Civil Liberties Defense Center or CLDC and we spoke before about a range of issues in May of this year, and before the George Floyd uprising and the resulting ACAB Spring. During the uprising, researchers, journalists, and activists saw that applications of new, or new to us, surveillance methods were being used by security forces against the populace in the so-called US, so I was hoping to pick Cora’s brain a bit about this and see, especially since upcoming months in the US also might get a little spicy with the election and all. Thank you Cora very much for taking the time to have this conversation.

Cora Borradaile: Yeah, it’s great to talk to you.

BOG: So just to list off a few things, like this summer we saw the use of military drones surveilling and sharing information with law enforcement in Minneapolis, lots of militarized gear being brought out in the streets across the US, or for late May at least protests against police violence, and collusion with para-state white supremacists have been ongoing in Portland, Oregon. In July we saw the deployment of federal officers from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) including Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) sent out to fight against protesters in the streets of Portland and attack and kidnap people. Including journalists from that and other cities. The US Marshalls also had their own aerial surveillance to track crowds in Portland, it came out this summer. On the tech side of things, the public got wind, apparently from leaks within the department of homeland security, that DHS had been cloning activists’ cell phones. Could you talk a little bit about this and what cell phone cloning is?

CB: Yeah, from that report their were very few details so a lot of it is guesswork as to what could possibly be going on. I could imagine two different ways in which their cloning cellphones. One which is scarier than the other. The more likely I think, is the less scary version which is if they manage to physically get your cell phone, like if you’re arrested and your cell phone is confiscated from you. Even if it’s confiscated temporarily, then they’re copying everything from your cell phone
Sean filed for clemency with the governor and we
told the governor the whole terrible story, and we
rallied public support, sometimes more than 100
emails a day went to the governor. We held our
breath hoping governor Dewine would see what
happened and be moved to give Sean his freedom. It
turns out Mike Dewine denied Sean’s request back in
April, and didn’t even tell us until October 21st. Not
only did Mike Dewine say the man I am about to
marry cannot come home, but didn’t have the
decency to let us know. That’s wrong. This is how
Mike Dewine treats non-criminals who didn’t even
have the benefit of Ohio’s current self defense law and
this is how he treat their loved ones. Mike Dewine is
not a friend to the second amendment, Ohio justice is
broken. There is no accountability. Judges break the
law, the parole board has no accountability and the
governor allows to continue business as usual.

I need Sean home and so does his mom Nancy, who’s
elderly. Sean is an only child and his dad died back in
March, Sean’s mom needs him home. Mike Dewine and
his officials neglect apathy, their loyalty to failed
approaches that don’t keep us safe are ruining the lives
of people, people like me. The Ohio governor general
the Ohio general assembly needs to pass serious
amendments to the courts and to abolish the parole
board entirely. And Mike Dewine needs to set up a
commission to select prisoners who are suitable for
release, as Ohio families don’t pay millions for prisons
more than they do for schools and road repairs, like
they do now. I am waiting for my husband to come
home. Any help in spreading this message would be
much appreciated.

Thank you.

BOG: There are a couple of other, I guess not insights but points in that Uturn article that I thought were
useful. Like if someone deletes information on their phone, are they actually deleting information off of
their phone, and are there appropriate or useful, good tools for actually wiping data off of phones or does it just kind of
at there?

BOG: --MAGNETS--

CB: I don’t know of a good tool. I think that if you do a factory reset of your phone that’s most likely to help
make that data inaccessible. Even then, is it actually getting completely deleted? It might not be. You have
memory on your computer or on your cellphone, and when you delete something it just kind of takes the index
away… I’m trying to use an analogy that people would remember. Do people remember libraries and card
catalogs? (laughs) All of my analogies are too old.

BOG: I think it’s fair, go ahead.

CB: You think people will remember?

BOG: I think so, or they’ve heard the analogy enough they’ll recognize what a card catalog is.

CB: They’ve seen a movie with an old-timey library and card catalogs?

BOG: Ghostbusters

CB: So, you have a big library with books on all the shelves and the way you know where to find a book is to go
to the card catalog. You look up the book that you want and you find its listed location on the shelf and then you
goto the shelf and you find the book. Well now, when you delete a file from a computer, really all you’re deleting
is the card from the card catalog. So when it comes time to put a new photo in the memory of your computer
or cellphone, you go to the shelf and you find out ‘Oh, there’s supposed to be space here because according to the
card catalog there’s nothing stored there, so this old data must be something that I don’t need anymore, now I’m
going to delete that old stuff.’ ‘Right, I’m going to remove that book from the shelf whose existence was deemed
not there anymore by the card catalog, I’ll throw it away now and put my new one in.’ So it’s not until you use
the memory again that the old information actually gets deleted.

BOG: At least on computers there’s – for instance I had to reinstall my operating system recently. And when I
installed it I went to encrypt the home folder and the file system and it asked ‘Do you want to overwrite
everything else on the hard drive?’ Is that what you’re talking about?

CB: Yeah, so that would be the equivalent of actually going to all the shelves of the old library and removing all
of the old books. So that’s pretty common when you’re setting up on a computer but I’ve never seen that option
on a phone, I'm wondering, does a factory reset actually delete all of that information? I haven't noticed that myself.

BOG: Microwaves. I mean I saw –

*Laughter

BOG: Yeah, I got nothing.

CB: They invented this thing called Rice though, where if you put your phone into a bag of rice it extracts the water... and the data...

*Laughter

BOG: Well are there any other things you'd like to share with the audience concerning digital tech or any insights?

CB: I did want to share one thing. You asked about them getting this data, and it's illegal search and seizure. There are still strange laws that date back to the 80's, for example e-mail can be accessed by law enforcement form somewhere like Google with just a subpoena and not a warrant, necessarily. For a law enforcement agency to get information that would otherwise be deemed illegal search and seizure, they need to get a warrant from a judge that proves probable cause for them to get that data or that physical item. But if it's email on a server held at Google then they don't need to prove probable cause and they just need a subpoena which is essentially just a 'Please can I have this information'. I think that's where these keyword searches are coming in, I'm not sure that they actually need to have a warrant for those. So that's maybe one extra detail on that front.

BOG: In those instances it’s in one centralized place, although if you're doing a keyword search... Yeah I don't know—I guess I don't know how

Google works on the inside and if it's just constantly categorizing what people are typing into its different services for later use and then providing that in easily digestible pills to law enforcement. If you're sending email and it's unencrypted, it's probably getting Hoovered up somewhere and fully readable anyway.

CB: Depends on who your adversary is. I don't think the Portland police department has access to a big Hoover of data on a global scale, but they certainly can ask Google for all of the emails of the activists whose email addresses they've extracted from the phones they confiscated during protests.

BOG: Cora, thank you so much. Cora is an associate professor of Computer Science at Oregon State University with a focus on Security State and The Adoption of More Secure Apps, and also is on the board of the CLDC. Thanks again for having this chat.

CB: It was wonderful talking to you, as always.

You can find archives of each episode of The Final Straw at www.thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org
Emails can be sent to: thefinalstrawradio@riseup.net or thefinalstrawradio@protonmail.com

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The Final Straw Radio:
Cora Borradaile on Phone Extraction, Cloning and Keyword Warrants

This episode originally aired on November 8th 2020. This transcription has been lightly edited for readability.

Bursts O’ Goodness: Airing first on Asheville FM, WFSM-LP 103.3 in Asheville, this is The Final Straw Radio, a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show broadcasting out of occupied Taishagland in Southern Appalachia. We bring you voices and perspectives from projects and struggles all around the world.

This week on The Final Straw you'll hear me speaking with Cora Borradaile who sits on the advisory board of the Civil Liberties Defense Center and works around issues of tech security and movement.

__Channel Zero Network plug and jingle intro__

BOG: And now an update about the condition of anarchist prisoner Sean Swain.

Lauren: Hello my name is Lauren ___, soon to be Lauren Swain. My partner Sean Swain has been confined by the state of Ohio for non-crime for almost 3 decades and Ohio governor Mike Dewine won't set him free. Sean acted in self defense in 1991, killing a man who kicked in his door and threatened his life. But Ohio had no self defense law. The castle doctrine wasn't introduced until after Sean went to prison, and because the man he killed was related to a court official, and because that court official was the chair of the democratic party, the prosecutor also a democrats—fabricated and concealed evidence of Sean's innocence. When Sean was wrongly convicted of crimes he didn't commit he won his appeal, but the trial court judge also a democrat, refused to give him a fair trial. They went as far as to block him from filing anything in court, making it impossible for him to get out. This is how Ohio courts operate. Ohio courts broke the law to imprison a man who hasn't broken the law. It's mind over matter: they don't mind, and he doesn't matter. And what they did to him they can now do to you.

Because he maintains his innocence and because he spoke out against corruption and injustices, the parole board has made Sean serve an additional 15 years and counting. Parole board members have specifically interrogated his criticisms about the parole system and his political activity, and then gave him more time. He's been punished for nothing more than telling the truth. Sean is a published writer of several books, he has a college degree, and is a certified paralegal. He's never been accused of any violence in his 29 years of imprisonment. He contributes weekly segments to a globally syndicated radio show. His personal papers are archived at the University of Michigan to celebrate his impact on American political culture. However the parole board treats Sean like a terrorist. They do this because they have no standards, no regulations, no statutes they have to follow and they can do whatever they want. Sean is a good man and I love him very much, but the powerful career bureaucrats run Ohio and they don't care about people like us. Governor Mike Dewine enables them.
I can patronize you, at least two ways, and neither enable the patriarchy. See, I didn’t call myself a feminist until I became a John. I tried to hashtag Not-All-Men my way out the friendzone, when Venmo had the answer all along…

I might be a straight-cis-hetero-frab-di but I become queer, (or at least a comrade) when I pay for pussy, however I came by the currency… It has no name on it, like a bullet, and though I may not be a father, I can be a Daddy (Going elsewhere when wifey won’t render certain services, or simply when that “strange” calls to me)!

I learned that it is the opposite of objectification when I Devil’s advocated a passport to first-world fragility out of an anarcho-batucuck on backwards day.

Anti-capitalism itself is victim-blaming, so abolish work (except sex work) and pass the ass...

I paid good money for it.

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Notes and Reflections from the 12/12 MAGA Rally 2 in D.C.
By Anonymous

- Lead-up to event plans (3 Main Steps)
1. A preliminary tactic of call-in campaigns against hotels and Harry’s Bar. This happened and there was a lot of public traffic directed toward this endeavor with many many calls made and emails sent, albeit unsuccessfully.

2. A potential plan to keep them from getting to hotels/gathering en masse to easily create the violent situations they have an advantage in. But this plan fell apart in some fashion (we weren’t in on the planning, so don’t know why) and never materialized.

3. A sort of “last defense” effort, and what could be considered most important/the bottom line-to hold and defend BLM Plaza from racist attacks - whether of symbolic targets or human.

Open planning before the event almost solely focused on steps 1 and 3.

Step 1: In hindsight it felt like following the playbook - i.e. the call-in campaign to Harry’s did not feel like it was worth the effort given their hard stance as a long time cop bar down with catering to the PB crowd, and with such big emphasis on that campaign up front it may have detracted from fully exercising steps 2 or 3.

Step 2 never happened, would have liked to see more use of diffuse tactics that either stymied their numbers overall, or kept them from easily reaching each other later in the day. The former would possibly consist of such tactics as keeping the “I’m openly going” crowd from leaving hometown and traveling to DC at all, in creative ways. The latter would possibly consist of diffuse medium-sized groups physically confronting them to keep them from joining each other from hotel to hotel, growing their numbers. The big hill in time to potentially get anything done here was between 2-3pm. What are the main choke points?...

We also have to be honest that the numbers of strikers/fighters never fully materialized, to think we could actually win a series of street battles with them if we deployed this type of diffuse fighting tactic. The bloc was strong, but questionable about reaching that tipping point to realistically stymie their ability to gather in large numbers at all. We’ll come back to the numbers problem later. It would have also required a lot more intelligence gathering than we saw leading up to this event. The same can be said for on-the-ground, real-time coordination. It’s worth noting that police response would likely be very different and potentially have led to either many more arrests or possibly more serious injuries. All that is to say, we should still try and develop some alternative ways to keep them from gathering en masse, where they hold a distinct advantage of comfort in their numbers.

- Step 3 is where the bulk of preliminary planning efforts that didn’t go into step 1 ended up going. The couple of times we got the chance to do so we were successful, though it is hard to measure that success when each instance was a 3-way fight where we were simultaneously pepper sprayed and attacked by police. The biggest instance of us potentially having to defend the plaza where it was clear police wouldn’t be close to stopping the fray, was when we were up at K street and all of the PB’s in their greatest numbers and closest proximity were just a half block away. They did not actually step to us though - they truly only seek out confrontation when they vastly outnumber
their targets. In this exemplified moment, we'd estimate their numbers at about 350, and ours at 250.

*It's worth noting that our additional ultimate goal as antifascists is not only to protect BLM Plaza but in this instance to deal a "last" to the Proud Boys that keeps them from wanting to come back.*

- **PB Optics**
  The Proud Boys have clear Nazi memberships, especially from booneheads and older "apolitical" skinheads, but the public has been so of a problem with "insurgent communist" movement (read BLM, Antifa, Anarchist, etc) than with open neo-nazis participating in violent street formations. Their terrible optics simply don't have the mainstream blow back that we think it does. Maybe this is changing? But doubtful. Currently, being anti-BLM is not equated by most or many Republicans with overt racism.

It is more likely that poor PB optics in total does at least pose the opportunity to drive wedges and hopefully splinter them to prevent the larger numbers they can currently muster, disdain other Trumpist/MAGA/Agro-Throwsists from comfortability in being around them at rallies, and create infighting and possible collapse overall.

*Side note* The wide spectrum of PB membership belies, (pro/anti-cop, multiracial/explicitly pro-white, Nazi/conservative) while certainly a possible point for a war of division between them, may actually lend toward a wider base of possible membership accrual and growth, however unsustainable we hope that might be.

- **Low Turnout**  
  - Key reasons are 1- Aversion to COVID; 2- Lack of Recruitment.
  - Lack of Recruitment - We saw lots of the usual suspects, but very few others from peoples’ (talking about regional A.G.’s here) wider networks. A lot of people from A.G.’s took for granted that the same couple of people tend to be the only ones exposed to wider regional spokes discussions, which means around discussions of the importance to go to these things. This leads to the assumption that when you say - "there a PB thing coming up" - that people will mobilize as they did back in 2017/2018, but nowadays it really isn’t working like that.
  - **COVID** - We need to come up with (maybe) an action/mobilization policy in COVID times, because there are definitely ways to safely engage, but with the potential risk, no matter how small in reality it often times is, still keeps so many away. This is especially important with the dynamic of COVID believers vs. COVID non-believers as a major difference in the background between the mobilizing groups.

- **Police** - Are we just letting the cops defend us? If the cops weren’t defending any of the 3 street entrances to the plaza, we wouldn’t have been able to "defend" the plaza very well, contrary to our intention - we would have just been in a large (and at times outnumbered) fight with Proud Boys IN the plaza. In hindsight, more planning around and a larger discussion concerning what defending the space really looks like is worth considering. Could 75-100 people at the end of each BLM block actually have been more effective?

Little intention to keep cops out - People were oddly okay with cops in the space half the time - even after snatch and grabs, police captains were free to both move into and throughout the space, and people made a deal with cops to get out of a situation of potential arrest. This was a non-confrontational situation, where one local activist made a deal to have their block of about 100 people escorted by police back to BLM plaza. It was super weird to see that same person super-angry at the cops as they arrived back, followed shortly by a literal conversation with a police captain in the middle of BLM Plaza all with little to no backing of such a weird shitty situation form the 200+ people around. Plus some of those in the bloc that came back were pissed to find out someone made a deal with cops in that situation, without communicating so with them.

- **Happening across this racist country, by our folks and others by the millions, is ardent resistance to institutions rooted in and geared towards oppressive domination and naked racist violence.**

I wonder, did the "Black" prison guard who dutifully executed his orders, report what actually transpired with regards to the brutally racist measures committed at Soledad Prison on July 20, 2020, via repressive agents screaming "F*ck Black Lives." Did he notify any federal agencies, speak with the press, etc.? Did he later quit, or right-on-the-spot quit his damn J.O.B.?

That’s a true “Black” person and/or righteous ally who genuinely cares about the wretched and who has a good heart, i.e., a person who is of a high character, motivated by uncompromising principles, rooted in justice, prepared to give up selfish sacrifice, etc.

Without that level and depth of commitment from all quarters or walks of life to include New African prisoners, we’ll go on losing! What must be recognized is that in fact, there is a method to their madness! Their immediate aim was to remind y’all who’s in charge! To exert a degree of force so as to "shake shit up," to cause fear and sow divisions amongst those who are inclined to break wide.

However, what they also managed to display, as is happening across this racist country, is their fear! They recognize what’s on the horizon as far as our folks and others by the millions being ardently resistant to institutions rooted in and geared towards oppressive domination and naked racist violence, it’s called getting ahead of the game, i.e. pre-emptive strikes!

The same was true as regards their reactionary measures post-Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and indeed that of their deeply draconian response, however cloaked, in terms of when our folks and many others “went up” in 1992! They’re ever making assessments and readjusting their strategies and tactics.

They know and realize conditions shall continually spark major unrest. Based on the dynamics of this system of oppression and exploitation, there’s simply nothing that they, those at the apex of this monster, can truly do but to direct their law enforcement agencies and military forces to quell uprisings.

Again, for most of those of the "badge," it is deep fear of our potential for serious and advanced organization, however positive and non-threatening, that actually is the threat! We understand human psychology and deal with folks amongst ourselves who are all image, masquerading cowardly depending on their "gang."

Law enforcement is really no different, but, of course, with one crucial distinction, which is: They are organized and trained, even as they have an intelligence apparatus which they rely upon, as far as Uncle Toms and rats amongst us, from here to general society. Beware!

To be continued ...

*"Live to Give, Free of FEAR!"*  
Study the book “Black Awakening in Capitalist America.”

Send our brother some love and light: Joe L. (A’ene) Valentine, C47779, Centinela State Prison A3-224, P.O. Box 921, Imperial, CA 92251.

Originally published by San Francisco Bay View. Written by Joe A’ene Valentine.
So damn what! A “Black face, white mask” law enforcement official is present or intervenes during the time repressive racist measures are being executed towards securing and advancing the political interests of our oppressors. In terms of pursuing the ruling class’s programs and agendas from prison to general society, “Black face, white mask” remains an active element of the master’s-enemy’s system, unless he or she shows otherwise by deeds.

There are folks who look like us, who have willingly chosen their side and identify their interests to be totally aligned with their brothers and sisters in green or blue, period! Yes, their job is more important than you!

This fact is made bare across the world, where we continually observe those of the “badge” engaged in targeting and controlling the wretched, as this is their primary function and an oath sworn. Just recently, this permanent truth was shown all around the world, same song, by the fact that now former chief of police of Rochester, New York, was attempting to cover up the outright murder of Daniel Prude, until his sly ass was exposed for the “Black face, white mask” that he is!

What did the “Black” mayor over that way express: “I failed,” i.e., “I, too, became an unprincipled and willing career-motivated Uncle Tom, a complacent and collaborating agent for the American system of white male supremacy and capitalism-imperialism.”

This is nothing new and shall persist or exist as long as our opportunistic species survives. There’ll always be those who look like us but who are really colluding Buffalo Soldiers, Red Tails and Harlem Hell-Fighters, i.e., those who’ve bought into the deception, if ye’ll catch my drift…?

We must cease playing with and entertaining illusions. This is what our dear leader Pravlin Fanon was emphasizing to us in his book “Wretched of the Earth.”

Yes, truly, the enemy is within! They approach us with smiles, handshakes, carrots etc., but they’re ever subordinate to their masters’ programs and agendas. Ask Colin Powell, Susan Rice, Barack Obama, Kamala Harris, Eric Holder, Condi Rice etc. Even the “radical” Liberal, Michelle Alexander, in her book “The New Jim Crow,” speaks of the “Black face, white masks” who took full advantage of the sacrifices made by primarily the wretched, in order to advance and secure their own livelihoods – at our cost!

Study the insightful work by Robert Allen, who thoroughly exposes those amongst us, especially and particularly as regards to those of the middle and minuscule Black upper classes. The pattern is the exact same and can be anticipated in all fields of law enforcement, unless you play the willful fool!

- Gatekeeping - This particular action, people experienced lots of gate-keeping. There were multiple times people were being kept out of BLM Plaza by liberal-types, albeit who were part of the organizing coalition. Before this first example, it’s worth noting there was a wide, public call made for people to come to BLM Plaza and help defend the space. This call went out over the internet, over the radio, it was very very public. There was an emphasis on this plan to garner mass-defense of the space in planning specifically to avoid small groups of BLM supporters and antifascists to be out in the streets without larger support given.

Upon arrival at BLM Plaza in the morning, about 30 people with SURJ were holding the space, with a loose line along the cement block perimeter of BLM Plaza (the accessible part we were in all day). When we walked up to join them, we were 1st asked to walk around. When we said we were there for the event and to help hold BLM Plaza like the event asked for, we were asked who we were, who we knew, where we were from, and what organization we were with. We were not allowed to be in the space. This lasted for about 30 minutes, which we spent talking to those we did know from all of the prior organizing efforts we were a part of, to figure out why this was happening. It seemed especially dangerous because we didn’t know how many people had been there before us and were met with the same rebuff. Eventually, the gatekeeping liberals messaged the only person from the AG a present and waiting who had a phone (who only had it because they initially planned to attend by themselves, imagine THAT rebuff scenario…).

There was eventually an apology made. At the end of this apology, it was said that because there were 4 people presenting as white men currently in front of them (this was not the original group rebuffed but now some people from the 2 groups rebuffed who happened to know each other), we should have expected to be met with distrust… This might be true in some instances, like predominantly black or brown held spaces but coming from a literal space dominated by 95% whiteness and Patagonia jackets, and after a clear and potentially dangerous (for us) misstep on their part—it was received as gross liberal over-posturing.

There were at least a few other instances of gatekeeping throughout the day, and that coupled with the past police were given to be in the space was… a dubious and disheartening beginning.
To be frank, between the gate-keeping experience and constantly hearing ahead of time how bad action days are there in DC, there is already a recipe to keep people away from answering calls to come out.

Quick Note on Gear. While its great to wear protective gear, lots of plate carriers were worn incorrectly. Both exposing you to injury, and to back problems from continual incorrect wear. Also, proliferation in tactical equipment should not necessarily include tactical aesthetic. Bloc is useless with poor opsec – super identifiable.

Example: Danner Tactical patches, spotted on dozens of people – it’s an easy store, remember how ties to an Ebay store were used for identifying a person of interest in a Philly police car fire this summer. Tactical gear can and should be used, but without making you a target.

- DC Mobilisation History

There is a history of people’s personal experiences that reflect on DC actions as lacking in tactical decision-making, poor prior communication with the outside who’ve been asked to come in, and local coalition communication breakdowns that leave locals stung, visitors confused, and everyone in more danger.

A metaphor from our perspective as attendees- DC mobilizations are like leg day. Few want to do them regardless of how important they might be. But in actuality, when you do actually go – if you don’t come away injured – you are definitely learning and growing a muscle you can’t get exercised in any other way... Weird metaphor – but we’re keeping it here...

**"DC activists should be very self-critical about past organizing shortcomings (especially ones that very much remain present shortcomings) if they want to help build a better base of regional support and active participation.

- What is the role actually of more seasoned antifascists?**

- It might be contentious to say, but the rebellion/acceleration is still going in many ways. How many shootings and stabwings were there Saturday, actions across the country? There is still a huge swell of rebellion happening in the streets. In this moment, it’s turning into a bit more of a confrontation with fascists in the streets. Remainders of the George Floyd rebellion are still most of those who are in the streets, and they have just as much if not more experience than 2017/2018 antifascists might’ve had in fighting police. At least in many places. Sure there are more seasoned antifascists who’ve also either participated all-out in this year’s rebellion or come with lots of prior experience in police battles from further back. And there might be less experience for antifascists in fighting police overall, but where the burgeoning rebels currently still motivated to hold it down in the streets do fail, is in raw confrontation with reactionary street forces. These need to be amalgamated! We as antifascists need to step forward in a robust way, let’s think about how to both recruit for the antifascist side of things and mutually share/learn each other’s strengths for the ever-developing 3-way fight ahead.

animal kingdom, that of a school of fish. An individual tuna makes an easy snack for a shark but by swimming together with other tuna they can make themselves appear to be a single, larger fish, and ward off predators. In numbers they find strength. This is the only type of passing we should aspire to; swarming together as a group to defend our weakest members, and working together in unison to protect one another. The world is full of sharks but together we can drive away predators that seek to drown us in their hate.


Check out more at wussmag.com

Know Your Enemies From Your Friends
By: Revolutionary Prisoner Joe Ajena Valentine

We’ve all probably heard the relevant sayings, “One bad apple, can ruin the whole bunch” and “The fruit doesn’t fall far from the tree”.

Yes, the tree being symbolic and indicative of the root, i.e., the very essence from whence the lone apple originated or fell. That’s the nature of what we’re actually confronted with in terms of the orientation which is systematically ingrained and promoted – i.e., reinforced – as regards law enforcement across the fascist-authoritarian board.

All else is... illusion!

There is no doubt that during the Nazi Germany genocidal onslaught there existed some “good” and “caring” Nazi, in the sense of some folks actually being under, or rather, not under, the brainwashing ideologies, but merely feigning conformity for purposes of self-preservation, since standing out like a sore thumb could be a very dangerous problem under conditions where the vast majority around you dutifully swim in authoritarian compliance.

It’s a basic and simple fact that under every oppressive order there were and are those who morally oppose the status quo, as I am sure was the case when our ancestors were being made to endure the barbarity that was slavery - direct colonial domination in white face.

Yes, there were also “good” and “caring” overlords since for some, it was simply a matter of economics. They, too, were born into a manufactured reality that was constructed via the powers that be – powers which created the socio-political conditions for even overzealous to “get in where they fit in” or succumb to poverty etc., feel me?

Yep, their behavior and opportunist thinking was definitely at the huge expense of Black folks, and for that, those of this nature are to be condemned. In other words, even as there are those who are “good” and “caring” people on a moral level, let us not ever be blind to the fact that, unless their “goodness” and “caring” goes beyond morally identifying and showing empathy or sympathy, it only amounts to nothing of real value as far as not being committed and active participants, however covertly, in assisting to eliminate the oppressive institutions or in the very least to serve to undermine their effectiveness.

My basic point is, particularly and especially as directed to those among us who persist naively, yelling or taking the incorrect position

SCAN ME

for a Spooooooky Vid!!!!
as a caterpillar, knowing I was a woman inside but passing myself off as a man to blend. Every word I spoke and every action I took ran through a filter to make sure it appeared masculine enough. It worked, I was passable. For many years I walked the world safely concealed within my disguise. It took great effort to maintain the illusion, to pass myself as a man, and created great pain within. Anyone who got too close would be pushed away, lest they discover my true self. But no matter how hard I tried, no matter how many people I fooled, I knew I was not that man. Eventually the time came for me to shed my passing privilege and become the me I had always known myself to be. I didn’t transition so I could pass. I stopped passing so I could transition. Now I simply am.

It doesn’t matter if stubble still peaks from under foundation or breasts still show through a binder. Trans women are women and trans men are men. The fear and hate of the outside world can’t change that. Let’s stop selling ourselves short, but instead embrace our true selves and our true beauty. We do not pass, we are.

There is one other type of passing present in the

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All artwork in this issue of *Hellbender* is from *HUSH*.

Issue 1, an illustrated work out of so-called Asheville.

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### HOROSCOPES

**Pisces** - It’s about time for that crumpled up surgical mask you’ve been using since March to be put to rest. The Rona is here to stay, so lift your spirits with some new masks.

**Taurus** - Winter is here, the revolution hasn’t come and you’re still living in a pandemic. This is the perfect time to sew a new patch over the mouth hole on your ski mask and continue to re-lARP. Stay safe and stay dangerous!

**Scorpio** - When your polycule was trying to figure out who was in and who was out of the pod, you took that shit seriously. Getting that P100 not only secured your spot, but it’s paid off all summer long when the tear gas couldn’t tear it.

**Aquarius** - As soon as your favorite Etsy seller posted their ACAB flower design masks you were all over it. It’s cute, edgy, and says exactly what you want at the socially distanced fire hungout: “I’m horny as, but safe about it”.

**Sagittarius** - To you, the bandana look is timeless. You’ve literally been wearing them with various outfits for years. No need to change now!

**Cancer** - Is that a scarf wrapped around your face? Bet that Elliot Smith is playing in those air pods too. Sure, it’s a seasonal, hipster look. But the real win is hiding that public cry in plain sight, with warm knit wool catching your tears before they even have time to fall.

**Virgo** - It’s no surprise you prefer to rock the gas station combo gator, Viny. It’s practical and tactical! Now, it’s just time to upgrade from that digital camo to some Money Oak.

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**COVID-19 matrix: Anti-Nihilist Insurrection Playlist**

*Solarised, "Dreamcatcher"
Yves Tumor - "Dream Palette"
Saul Williams - "Before the War"
Zeal and Ardor - "Turkese"
B L A C K I R (All Caps With Spaces)
"Not Part of Their Plan"
Nicole Mitchell and Moor Mother - "Vultures Laughing"
clipping - "Club Down"
Pink Siifu - "FK"
dreamerusher - "PSA"
Primitive Man - "Consumption"
Littlest - "No Remorse"
The HIRS collective - "I’m Tired (featuring Pierce Jordan)"
Soul Glo - "29"
La Armada - "Plagued"
Ho99o9 - "Chris Dornier"

**Capricorn** - The N95. The cr! me de la cr! me. It was definitely worth the steal from work, Cappy... even if your face looks like fuggin’ Beldar from The Conoids.

**Libra** - It’s likely you have the same mask that didn’t fit your face back when Covid popped and... it still doesn’t. For the love of god, the shoestring tie behind your head is not a good look. Functional, sure. But we live in a material world. Find a better fit.

**Gemini** - You really are a gem, Gem. You’ve been a DIY kid for years, and when corona hit town you got to sewing masks for all your buddies, the mutual aid project, and quite a few for yourself. Sharing is caring and you’re no Karen.

**Aquarius** - You’ve been known to wear 2 masks at once and you’re definitely the one seen driving by yourself still wearing your mask. You’d wear one of those plague doctor masks if you didn’t hate steampunk so much!

**Leo** - So many masks, masks everywhere! They’re stashed all over and not just because you’ve dramatically forgotten them on crucial trips before, but because you never know which design will go perfectly with today’s outfit. And sure, you’ve perfected the Banda – but the right accent below that hanes is crucial.
Hellbender

A periodical of anarchist ideas, stories, art and fun.

Passing Thoughts On Passing

By Unknown

I can still remember the first time I heard the words: “You look totally passable. I’m so jealous.” I was attending my first local transgender gathering when an older lady approached me with pride. I knew the term, but this was the first time someone directed it at me. I took it as a compliment and sign of success. I came home that night feeling proud of myself. I hadn’t even started HRT and I was already passable! How lucky I was! And I was certainly lucky. By virtue of genetics and youth I was able to blend among the cis easier than most. That night I was too thrilled by my own success to consider the deeper meaning of the words. As I matured however, I began to take a more nuanced view of passing and the culture it breeds. Passing is such a simple phrase, spoken often, but filled with meaning. I have seen it slip from many lips, including my own. The word is ubiquitous within our community, and is one of the most damaging phrases which permeates our culture.

Passing, you see, implies pretending. To pass is to convince the world around you that you are something different from what you are. When we claim passing as a mantle of success we sell ourselves short. Passing is in fact the very thing from which so many of us have run. Elsewhere in the animal kingdom passing is common. Predators and prey alike use camouflage to pass themselves off as things they are not. The mantis passes itself as a stick, the caterpillar as a leaf, the stonefish as a . . . well, you get the point. Each of these or these animals blends themselves into their surroundings to survive. But the mantis is not a stick; it has merely adopted its appearance to better stalk its prey. The mantis matches perfectly with the narrative that is pushed so aggressively by anti-trans bigots, that trans women are not real women but men trying to trick others to take advantage of them. When we talk about ourselves in reference to passing we play into this narrative. One must wonder if the animal kingdom is filled with anti-trans activists decrying the way they pass themselves as sticks and leaves to lure in unsuspecting young grasshoppers. In the insect world such a protest might just be justified. Unlike the mantis though, trans people are not predators. We are not pretending to be something else to better stalk our prey. We are not the mantis; we are the leaf.

Applying the term passing to a trans person makes as much sense as it does for a leaf. A trans man does not pass as a man any more than a leaf passes as a leaf. The leaf is a leaf and the trans man is a man.

In reality, passing is the very thing countless trans people have fought as hard as escape. Like so many of my trans sisters and brothers I lived the first half of my life