

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR RELEASE OF FEDERAL POLITICAL PRISONERS

WHEREAS, the imprisoned people named below are serving federal sentences for their political views and actions in support of progressive movements for social justice and in defense of our planet and animals;

WHEREAS, they have consciously joined struggles against social injustice, colonialism, and environmental destruction and the destruction and torture of animals and have been incarcerated as a result of these political commitments, and, though they are in prison, they continue to adhere to their principles;

WHEREAS, the term “political prisoner” is accepted throughout the international community;

WHEREAS, the women and men targeted and convicted as a result of COINTELPRO, the infamous and illegal counter-intelligence program of the U.S. government, and contemporary government strategies to “neutralize” progressive movements, were given disproportionately harsh sentences compared to others convicted of similar crimes;

WHEREAS, the President’s clemency power is conferred by Article II, Section 2, Clause 1 of the Constitution of the United States, which provides: “The President . . . shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States.”

WHEREAS, the President’s clemency power includes the ability to commute the sentence of a person imprisoned for federal crimes;

WHEREAS, many U.S. held political prisoners have increasingly serious medical issues which are not being treated and will die in prison unless they are released;

WHEREAS, Veronza Bowers is a member of the Black Panther Party who has been imprisoned for over 40 years for the murder of a U.S. park ranger he still denies, and who should be free;

WHEREAS, Oscar López Rivera is an advocate for self-determination for his country, Puerto Rico, and has served over 35 years for his conviction of seditious conspiracy and, at 72 years old, he has spent almost half his life in prison, and should be free;

WHEREAS, Leonard Peltier, of the Anishinabe, Dakota, and Lakota Nations, is an advocate for self-determination for indigenous peoples and a member of the American Indian Movement who has spent over 40 years in prison and is now 71 years old, in poor health, and has been diagnosed with an advanced stage of abdominal aortic aneurism which requires surgery and should be free;

WHEREAS, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, a doctor of acupuncture and former member of the Revolutionary Action Movement and the Provisional Government of the Republic of New

Afrika, was convicted after the prosecutor told the jury that it was “political views which motivated” Mutulu Shakur and his co-defendants charged with conspiracy to rob banks and aiding in the escape of Assata Shakur; Dr. Mutulu Shakur, incarcerated for more than 30 years, and after suffering a stroke in 2013, should be free;

WHEREAS, Jaan Laaman, has been a radical activist since the 1960s when he worked with Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Panther Party and the Puerto Rican Young Lords, and in 1984 he was arrested as one of the Ohio 7, and charged with seditious conspiracy and convicted of five bombings in which no one was injured, but U.S. military sites and corporations profiting from apartheid were damaged; Jaan Laaman, imprisoned for more than 32 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Tom Manning was arrested in 1985 and convicted, as one of the Ohio 7, with a series of bombings targeting South African apartheid and U.S. imperialism, in which no one was injured, and was also convicted of the murder of a police officer, which Tom argued was self-defense after the police shot at Tom and his companion; Tom Manning, imprisoned for more than 31 years, and now confined to a wheelchair, should be free;

WHEREAS, Bill Dunne is an anti-authoritarian sentenced to 90 years for the attempted liberation of comrades from jail in 1979, and for attempting to free himself from Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1983, who, along with his codefendant, Larry Giddings (paroled from federal prison in 2004), was accused by police of being “members of a small, heavily armed group of revolutionaries,” and, after more than 37 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Grailing Brown (known as Kojo Bomani Sababu) is a former member of the Black Liberation Army currently serving a 55 year sentence for a bank robbery (his co-defendant, Ojore Lutalo, was paroled in August 2009), and an attempted prison escape with Oscar López Rivera; and, after more than 41 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Warren Ballentine (known as Abdul Azeez), Beaumont Geri (known as Hanif Sahibs Bey), and Meral Smith (known as Malik Smith), collectively known as the Virgin Islands Three, were known supporters of the Virgin Island independence movement and after being arrested during a sweep by the FBI and U.S. Army and subjected to torture were convicted of the murders of eight U.S. tourists on St. Croix, and sentenced to eight consecutive life terms; after 44 years, they should be free;

WHEREAS, Byron Shane Chubbuck (known as Oso Blanco), is a Cherokee/Choctaw who expropriated money from over a dozen banks to help fund progressive indigenous movements within the U.S., and the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, and has been imprisoned since 2001 serving a 80 year sentence; Oso Blanco, after 15 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Marius Mason (formerly known as Marie Mason) is an anarchist, environmental and animal rights activist currently serving nearly 22 years in federal prison for two acts of property damage claimed by the Earth Liberation Front in which no one was physically harmed, but for which Marius was punished with a “terrorism” sentencing enhancement; Marius Mason should be free;

WHEREAS, Brandon Baxter, Connor Stevens, Joshua Stafford, and Doug Wright, collectively known as the Cleveland Four, were activists with Occupy Cleveland who were entrapped and convicted of plotting a series of bombings in a scheme planned and coordinated by the FBI, and sentenced pursuant to “terrorist enhancements;” and, after more than 4 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Jeremy Hammond was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison in November 2013, for leaking information from the private intelligence firm Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor) through the whistle-blowing website Wikileaks and revealing that Stratfor spies on activists at the behest of corporations and the U.S. government; Jeremy Hammond should be free;

WHEREAS, Barrett Brown was indicted for internet postings related to data from the Stratfor information leak carried out by hackers from Anonymous, and in January 2015 was sentenced to 63 months in federal prison; Barrett Brown should be free;

WHEREAS, Walter Bond (known as Abdul Haqq) is an imprisoned Animal Liberation Front activist, who pled guilty to burning down a sheepskin factory, a leather factory and a restaurant which sold foie gras, and one count under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act; Abdul Haqq should be free;

WHEREAS, Justin Solondz pled guilty to conspiracy and arson for his involvement in the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) arson of the University of Washington’s Center for Urban Horticulture in 2001 and a car dealership, and should be free;

THEREFORE, be it hereby resolved that the National Lawyers Guild at its convention in New York City in 2016 calls upon U.S. President Barack Obama to commute the sentences of the aforementioned prisoners and immediately grant their release.

THEREFORE, let it be further resolved, that the National Lawyers Guild reaffirms it’s support for the following federal prisoners who are imprisoned for actions taken in support of movements for social justice.

IMPLEMENTATION: This resolution is to be implemented by the NLG Political Prisoner Support Committee, in coordination with the NLG National Office, and the anticipated support of other committees and chapters to educate their members and the public about this issue.

Submitted by: NLG Political Prisoner Support Committee (Benjamin Evans, Judith Mirkinson and Melinda Power) Contact: politicalprisoners@nlg.org; 401-258-4239

NLG Executive Director Pooja Gehi has consented on behalf of the National Office to assist in implementing this resolution.