



Fred Hampton by Kevin Rashid Johnson

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we've been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

We also frequently feature commentary (serious and humors) by anarchist prisoner, Sean Swain.

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# REPORTER WITHIN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST: JASON RENARD WALKER



## The Final Straw Radio

A conversation with Jason Renard Walker, an incarcerated journalist and activist at the Clemens Unit near Amarillo, Texas. Jason is the Minister of Labor for the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter) and his writing is frequently featured in the SF Bay View National Black Newspaper.

*Aired on April 18, 2020*

The following text is transcription of an interview with Jason Renard Walker, an incarcerated journalist and activist at the Clemens Unit near Amarillo, Texas. Jason is the Minister of Labor for the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter) and his writing is frequently featured in the SF Bay View National Black Newspaper. You can find more of Jason's writings at his blog, **JasonsPrisonJournal.com**, including a link to his recently published e-book *Reports from Within The Belly Of The Beast: Torture and Injustice Inside Texas Department of Criminal Justice* available from Amazon.com and hopefully soon in paperback. He also just published this piece on his blog about the coverup around covid-19.

Check his website for a current mailing address, but as of publishing [Feb 2, 2021] he could still be reached at:

**Jason Renard Walker #1532092**  
**Clements Unit**  
**9601 Spur 591**  
**Amarillo, TX 79107**

You can hear our chat from 2018 with Kevin Rashid Johnson (co-founder of the NABPP and Minister of Defense for the Prison Chapter) by looking up the post titled 'Kevin Rashid Johnson on the #PrisonStrike + Two Audio Zines' at **thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org**

Jason Renard Walker also mentions Julio Alex Zunigo, aka Comrade Z, who is rustling up resistance in Darlington Unit. His interview can be found by looking up the post titled 'Anarchist Resistance In Prison: Jennifer A. Rose and Comrade Z' at **thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org**

*art by Kevin Rashid Johnson, available on Jason's blog.*

**TFSR: Are there any subjects that I failed to ask about that you'd like to speak to?**

**JRW:** No, there isn't. But I'd like to take time to thank everyone that has helped me with my progress, education, development and needed support. Too many to name here. And a \$1 donation will be given to the San Francisco Bay View for every paperback issue of my book sold!



Kathleen Cleaver by Kevin Rashid Johnson

work stoppage. But even the civil suit filers learned a valuable lesson, I hope they are building on.

**TFSR: Where do you see the efforts in the US around prisoner issues? Similar to the prior questions, do you have any inspirations or challenges you'd like to pose to either those on the outside or the inside?**

**JRW:** Efforts to organize in the U.S. around prisoner issues are scattered, contradicting and often misunderstood. You have some prisoner writers out there labeled activists, though their writings and disinterest in foot work reveals their Black Capitalist / White Capitalist / Brown Capitalist interest and agenda. You have others still engaged in the sale of drugs that hold a street mentality called revolutionary but gangsta. Allowing them to engage in some activism while holding the same criminal mentality and world view their activism supposedly opposes. It's the do as I say not as I do thing.

The challenge to prison activists inside and on the outside is to stay firm at what you do. Continue learning how to strengthen your organization and or support circle, educate those around you about your program and be a positive representative in your community upon release.

For instance the NABPP has transitioned to the outside. Comrade, Chairman Shaka Zulu and others have created our outside headquarters in Newark, New Jersey. Giving us the opportunity to create and expand our community service programs. This includes our Black August BB9, No Prison Fridays protest, and Free Food breakfast and lunch program that occurs Saturdays between 10am and 4pm. These programs are sponsored by Panthers and service community volunteers. Shaka Zulu helped bring this to life upon his release from prison.

As it shows, the NABPP is among the most firm in regards to In-Prison activism, organizing and carry this on in the oppressed and impoverished communities. The role of the NABPP is not to pose as a rescuer of the people but to uplift, inspire and teach them. Through their own cooperation and collective power, they can solve their own problems, meet their own needs and free themselves from this racist, exploitative and oppressed society.

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**TFSR: Would you please introduce yourself for the audience? Feel free to include any details about your background, political affiliation or current circumstances you think will give a good context for the conversation.**

**Jason Renard Walker:** My name is Jason Renard Walker, Minister of Labor for the New Afrikan Black Panther Party, Prison Chapter. I consider my political stance as a reflection of our party's rules of discipline, principals, adherence to our ten point program and platform and our goals for the future.

For clarity, please feel free to learn about what I mean by reviewing the United Panther Movement section of my website at [www.JasonsPrison-Journal.com](http://www.JasonsPrison-Journal.com) . Just for the record, I don't see myself as Democrat, Republican, Anarchist, Communist, or Socialist. I know this seems contradictory to the circumstances, but I'm all about positive change for society and the future of those to come. The New Afrikan Black Panther Party's effort to carry on the legacy and goals of the original Black Panther Party is my higher calling. And regardless of not holding an official political stance, my ability to execute my duties and help build the party would be the same if I did have a political stance. Though I'm certainly anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist.

**TFSR: Would you mind telling us about your past, the case you caught and an overview of the conditions of your incarceration in Texas?**

**JRW:** Just like a majority of our comrades and party members, I am a product of my environment. The streets of Est Oakland, where I grew up, is riddled with drugs, street gangs, violence, prostitution and so on.

If members in my family weren't drug dealers, addicts, pimps, cons, prostitutes and so on. They held impractical religious views, empty of practical solution, coupled with the preachings of prayer and belief under the banner that this alone would make me a successful member of society.

The latter did little to persuade me from following the footsteps of people I admired; which were drug dealers and crooks that had more than their fair share of wealth and stability. While the so-called true believers toted the transit bus to spend their welfare checks and food stamps. Not only

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did I witness these contradictions within my neighborhood. I witnessed them within my own family.

By the age of 14 in 1994 I had dropped out of school, became a full time criminal and began experiencing the consequences of my actions. After spending two years in detention centers and a group home in Gilroy, CA called Advent group ministries. I moved to Garland, Texas with my grandma to stay with my aunt and cousin in 1998.

This was supposed to be my transformation from a criminal to a productive member of society...All this did was transfer a career criminal from committing crimes against the poor to committing crimes against the unwitting rich... There was no plan to rid me of my thoughts and behavior so I brought them with me to places no one knew such incivility existed, making these people easier and more fruitful targets of burglary, scams, drug sales and armed robbery.

I received an 18 year sentence in 2008 for robbery and have done 12 years on it so far, since then my outlook on life has changed. From my own experience and from what I read, conditions in Texas prisons are far worse here than most prison systems in the U.S. What gives Texas the edge is that it's an overtly for-profit-only system. Prisoners undergo unpaid forced labor, grow, harvest and tend to the food we eat, and work and operate everything short of running the cell blocks.

I give a vivid account of the conditions on my kindle ebook on amazon.com called "Reports From Within The Beast: Torture and Justice Inside Texas Department of Criminal Justice". I recommend that all your listeners get a copy. The writings span the years 2010-2019, including some of my work during my seven year stay in solitary confinement.

**TFSR: We've seen your journalism featured in the SFBay View National Black Newspaper. Can you talk about your publishing, feedback you've gotten and repression you've faced for your expression?**

**JRW:** The San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper has been a big supporter of my writings. If they weren't publishing journalism by me they published journalism about things concerning me and the bad conditions prisoners are facing in Texas. This includes our organizing and

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**that are particular to the TDCJ or any of the units you've been kept in? Where do you see the efforts in the US around prisoner issues? Similar to the prior questions, do you have any inspirations or challenges you'd like to pose to either those on the outside or the inside?**

**JRW:** The only organizing efforts I'm aware of are the ones involving the NABPP, the IWOC and scattered anarchist prisoners in Texas. Since I've been in close custody (two man solitary) I haven't had the chance to use the phone, limiting my access to information.

In fact, incarcerated anarchist Julio A Zuniga (aka Alex) is at the Darrington Unit in Rosharon, Texas organizing. His focus seems to be on conditions, medical care, filth, the treatment of the mentally ill and gladiator fights.

Final Straw listener, Matt Brodnax, did an interview with Alex that is published online. But there are many organizing efforts by unknown Texas prisoners who too face unwarranted acts of repression, including the destruction of ongoing / incoming mail and personal property. I've met several during my stay at the Ellis Unit, Michael Unit and Allred Unit. Their lack of firmness in the face of reprisals have kept their efforts to organizing limited to filing grievances and complaining amongst each other. In these circles I'm viewed as radical and going too far. Though they wonder why they can't win false disciplinary cases.

We need more isolated and groups of prisoners to take their organizing to the next level. If using un-radical forms of organizing was effective, not one prisoner would need to take things to the next level. These groups must form bonds of unity as well. For example, a lot of prisoners chose filing civil suits challenging the 13th Amendments clause on legal slave labor. This was in response and following the 2016 work stoppage. Their focus was on losing commissary privileges, dayroom time and whatnot. So to circumvent foreseeable retaliation and applying some serious action, they used the governments recommended channel, getting each of their claims dismissed as frivolous, wasting both time and their own resources.

In a few instances some prisoners did file civil suits and participate in the

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ignored. I submitted my request four days ago. Today is April 5th. Nurse Ms. Spencer came to see me. I was told I didn't have a fever so no further care was necessary.

There is no obvious plan in place to prevent further spreading. Guards are wearing masks and there are notes posted about staying six feet away from others. Thus we are confined to our cells with another prisoner and have no way to read any postings that are located places beyond sight-and-walking authority.

I've learned that taking vitamin c supplements and drinking citrus flavored electrolyte drinks slow down the manifestation of the germ, along with limited physical activity, lots of sleep and staying warm.

The key thing people on the outside can do for us is to constantly contact the prison warden about the number of confirmed cases, requesting our medical records, as to monitor their response time to our sick call requests, our diagnosis and the type of treatment we are receiving. Sending us updates on how it's spreading in our particular area and any info they have that can help prevent spreading and exposure. Hair scanning is the only prevention plan being implemented here (whatever that is).

We are being given false info on self diagnosis and testing. One thing that has to be a public concern is how nurses use our blood pressure results to determine if we are sick, hurting, having a stroke and whether we have a common cold or the common flu. I actually describe one instance in my book concerning a stroke victim who was denied hospitalization for over twelve hours based on his blood pressure results. He is now paralyzed and had to undergo brain surgery because of the long delay. No staff were held liable, they actually brought him back from the infirmary on a gurney and laid him on his cell floor, where he remained until we convinced the next shift that he was dying. This incident occurred here at the Clemens Unit. My advice to prisoners is to take matters into your own hands. If you feel you are sick and in need of medical care, keep trying to get it. Don't let nursing staff suggest your blood pressure is the factor whether you are sick or not. Don't let medical copay fees factor in either...

**TFSR: Are there organizing efforts in Texas around prisoner issues that you would like to highlight or needs that need to be addressed**

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supporting the 2016 and 2018 National Prisoner Work Stoppage. And the reprisals we faced for doing so.

Not only have my journalism in the Bay View drawn the hatred of some guards, it has drawn negative feedback from white supremacist groups that conspire with these same guards to smuggle illicit drugs into the prison namely the deadly drug, k-2.

In the October 2018 issue of the Bay View I wrote an article called "Prison Assisted Drug Overdoses". This forced Texas officials into giving guards more scrutinized searches before entering the prison, including the use of drug sniffing dogs. Guards have used my article as a manipulation tactic to raise smuggling fees by suggesting that my article in particular has made smuggling riskier. In turn I've been confronted by random individuals and groups about the article. These same individuals admit not having read the article so they are ignorant to the message I deliver. I've even tried suggesting they read the article to no avail. It only exposes ignored prisoner overdosing.

They are completely reactionary and tend to gravitate towards what guards tell them. Like I've been confronted about being a child molester, racist, terrorist, CIA operative and instigator with evidence supposedly the information. Combating this has been quite easy.

I've also gotten a lot of positive feedback from other journalists and Bay View readers in the U.S. and Europe who have become supporters of my work and who have chosen to investigate the conditions I describe in my articles.

**TFSR: You recently published a book entitled 'Reports from Within the Belly of the Beast: Torture and Injustice Inside Texas Department of Criminal Justice' that, among other things, compiles some of your writings you previously published. Can you talk about your method of organizing your writing, who your audience is and what you hope the book achieves?**

**JRW:** I really don't have a method of organizing my writings. I tend to first document times and dates on things I see or learn of. I seek witnesses and victims, who are always willing to let me write about them. Sometimes

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I'll ask a guard about something. Most of the instigators and abusers will openly brag about what they did. At the time they aren't aware that an article will be written and who I am. After the hammer comes crashing down, they face me with looks of betrayal as if I'm not supposed to expose them because they may have given me extra food or recreation time in the past. Guard Darius Reed stole a Bay View, it mentioned him.

I have a large audience that includes Bay View readers, the Houston Chronicle, the Texas Tribune, SolitaryWatch.Org, the Anarchist Black Cross group, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) and hundreds of people who have never written me but have sent me books and magazines like Sheri Black and Sam Rosen in Great Britain. Or those who send words of courage but fail to provide a reply address.

The message in the book speaks for itself. I hope and wish that it sets in the hands of as many readers as possible. I haven't found a book by a Texas prisoner of this magnitude like it. It also includes unpublished articles, a forward by Maggie Ray Anderson, a 2011 Central Washington University graduate who got a B.A. in law and justice and a B.S. in social services and Kevin Rashid Johnson.

**TFSR: Do you have any plans to publish your book in physical form so it can be available to people in prison?**

**JRW:** Actually we are in the process of publishing 500 copies of the paperback version, specifically so that prisoner supporters can have a copy sent to an incarcerated loved one or friend. These copies will be available on amazon.com as well only costing \$5 per copy. Before the paperback version is released we will have it available for pre-release ordering so we'll know if more copies and how many more will need to be printed. The ebook and the paperback version have come to fruition by the funds and work of me and my girlfriend. But we could use the help of an underwriter or independent publisher.

**TFSR: A year and a half ago we had the pleasure to speak with Kevin Rashid Johnson of the NABPP about the organizing he was doing, about the prison strikes, organizing on the outside and his organization. Would you talk about how you came to join the NABPP, what**  
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**your position in it is, and how organizing in Texas has been as a member of that group?**

**JRW:** Given the circumstances, it would be difficult for me to answer this question without this entire questionnaire being banned by the mailroom. Not because of the content but to delay the radio interview entirely under the false pretext that it contains security threat group information. Some insight can be caught by viewing [www.RashidMod.com](http://www.RashidMod.com).

**TFSR: Are there any other groups you have organized with that you'd care to mention? For instance, you received punishment in the aftermath of the Nationwide Prisoner Strikes in 2016 and 2018.**

**JRW:** Yes, during the 2016 and 2018 National Prison Work stoppage I had the joy to work with the IWOC, different branches of the ABC, the Free Alabama Movement (FAM) and a group in Colorado that published The Fire Inside Zine, which I wrote a piece for. The Fire Inside related to the 2016 work stoppage.

**TFSR: A common concern raised around incarceration in the US is a lack of medical treatment, the high cost and low quality when it is available, overcrowding and under-staffing leading to medical and health emergencies. I've noted on the outside that the conversation is raised more frequently recently during ecological disasters like hurricanes or when people protest the use of solitary confinement in lieu of mental health resources. Now, with the panic and obvious lack of preparedness around Covid-19 (novel coronavirus), can you talk about health and preparedness in terms of incarceration in the US and what the public on the outside can be doing to support the folks in cages?**

**JRW:** I'm glad you brought up the coronavirus. I just recently wrote a short piece on the lack of care we are provided in the midst of this and the prisoners failure to receive care to avoid paying \$13.55 medical co-pay fees.

Since I wrote that piece five prisoners were moved to this prison with Corona Virus. They received it from a sick guard during transportation. Now guards at this prison have been confirmed to have it. It is spreading. My request to be tested, because I'm showing signs of illness, have been  
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