

The Free Virginia Movement #1

By the Free Virginia Movement Collective

The Free Virginia Movement is a prisoner-led Inside/Out collective supported by the Incarcerated Worker Organizing Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World union (IWW/IWOC). The purpose of the IWW/IWOC is to organize prisoners nationwide into One Big Union and support prisoners in their Direct Action campaigns such as work stoppages, hunger strikes, boycotts, petition drives, etc. The Free Virginia Movement (FVM) is the vehicle by which a collective of Virginia prisoners are trying to organize a coordinated statewide work stoppage/strike beginning September 1, 2016 through January 1, 2017 in an effort to protest the abolition of parole, mass incarceration, and inhumane, counter-productive prison conditions.

The Free Alabama Movement was/is the main inspiration behind the formation of the FVM. Those brothers and sisters in the Alabama prison system recognize that the only way to combat mass incarceration and inhumane, cruel and unusual prison conditions, and their affects

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on Black, Brown, and poor communities is through Direct Action!

Our situation here in the Virginia prison system is dire. Because of the abolition of parole and the implementation of truth-in-sentencing laws, Virginia prisoners are ranked second only to prisoners in Florida in terms of the length of time we serve on our sentences. The decision of the Parole Review Commission not to discuss or recommend parole reinstatement are proof that Virginia government officials will not budge on the issue of serious parole reform and de-carceration... unless we force them to.

Older prisoners still eligible for parole under the so-called "old law" - whose crimes happened before parole was abolished in 1995 - are repeatedly denied parole because of the oft used reason of "serious nature of the crime"; prisoners who are ineligible for parole ~~whose crimes happened after parole was abolished~~ under the so-called "new law" - whose crimes happened after parole was abolished - must serve a whopping 85 percent of his/her sentence and are routinely sentenced to excessive, de facto life without parole sentences with no reasonable opportunity for release.

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Let's face it, under the current ultra-conservative political climate here in Virginia in regards to parole reform, many of us serving time under both the old and new law are destined to die in prison, or be released so old that most of us won't have a single family member left alive to return home to.

And because of cuts to the VA Department of Corrections' \$1 billion annual operating budget, prisoner jobs, education and treatment programs have been cut; food portions have been slashed; food quality is deplorable; excessive commissary prices are the new normal; prisons are understaffed; and decent medical care is lacking. Our incarceration here in the pro-mass incarceration state of Virginia is a slow, torturous, cruel and unusual experience. SO IT SEEMS WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS!

Prisoners are demonstrating in Alabama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Mississippi, and Texas, to name just a few, in an effort to maintain their humanity and dignity, and exercise control over their destiny. It is past time for prisoners in Virginia to join these

righteous prison movements, especially since we are serving more time on our sentences than most prisoners in other states. So we should have an even greater incentive to engage in a healthy dose of NON-COMPLIANCE!

The IWW/IWOC and rebel prisoners in other states have put out a nationwide call for prisoners all around the country to engage in a work stoppage/strike beginning September 1, 2016. The FVM calls for this strike to continue through January 1, 2017. This nationwide work strike has the potential of bringing the profits derived from cheap and free prisoner labor to a grinding halt, and this system of prolonged mass incarceration to its knees.

If you want to learn more about our Free Virginia Movement, our goals, our list of demands, and the politics of Virginia's abolition of parole law, please write to The Free Virginia Movement, P.O. Box 4571, Midlothian, Virginia 23112, and ~~ask for~~ request our manifesto (in zine form). A three stamp donation is welcomed.