

# ON THE OUT

A zine about life after prison



# INTRODUCTION

You're holding in your hand what we hope to be the first edition of "On The Out", a new pamphlet published by Bristol Anarchist Black Cross. This zine is a collection of writings by ex-prisoners and their supporters on life after prison. We hope that it will go some of the way to filling the gap in prisoner support literature for information on post-prison life.

We initially came up with the idea for "On The Out" after supporting friends and allies through their licenses and reading an article by former animal rights prisoner Lewis Pogson about his experience after prison and being on license.

There appeared to be a severe lack of resources about life after prison, and it seemed to us like this was an important aspect of prisoner support that was being overlooked. Once a prisoner left prison, it felt, they were no longer affected by repression and didn't fall under the remit of "prisoner support".

The reality was that the majority of prisoners in the UK only serve around 50-75% of their sentence in prison before being released. The remainder of their sentence will be spent on license. A limbo like state where you are neither in Prison nor free. The Prison system uses this as another tool of oppression, limiting people's freedoms.



This pamphlet aims to tear down the walls surrounding licenses and probation for the world to see. In this zine we have collected several articles, interviews and discussions from former prisoners and their supporters about their experiences after prison.

Also included is a glossary of terms for those not fluent in the language of oppression spoken by Her Majesty's Prison Service.

If you have any comments, criticisms or would like to submit articles for future editions of On The Out please contact us by email: [bristol\\_abc@riseup.net](mailto:bristol_abc@riseup.net) or by post to: Bristol ABC, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6JY, England

Until Every Cell Is Empty

Bristol Anarchist Black Cross  
October 2013  
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# PROBATIONARY TALES

Former animal liberation prisoner Lewis Pogson writes about license conditions & their attacks on freedom

The last years of the Blair government saw a concerted attack on civil liberties and freedoms associated with political activism through increased legislation designed to criminalise protest. The police received greater powers to allow them to target activists and the lengths of sentences imposed by courts have swiftly grown.

In April 2012 I finished a three year sentence for my support of actions against the violent tyranny that is vivisection. Since my sentence finished I have been doing a small amount of work on some of the most extreme and fanatical, yet virtually undocumented, repression that is being used against activists: the legislation that is applied to them once they are released from prison. Without any professional legal advice, qualifications in Law or an understanding of the Orwellian jargon institutions like the Probation Trust use, not to mention their secretive nature, this this has proved somewhat difficult.

Here, I am attempting to cast a light on the way political prisoners are treated when they are released from gaol. This is based on personal experience of that of myself and other people sharing similar predicaments, as well as the wider context of the treatment of prisoners in general by the Criminal Justice System.

Generally speaking, prisoners are released from gaol half way through their sentence. This is a legal agreement between the gaol and the prisoner.



Technically, they are still prisoners but they have been allowed by the last prison they reside in to serve the rest of their sentence 'in the community.' For prisoners with sentences of a year and over, the time after their release from prison is 'managed' by the Probation Trust. There are two major factors in the 'management' of a released prisoner: regular appointments with an 'Offender Manager' and a licence.

Essentially, the licence is the contract between the prison and the prisoner that allows their release; standard licences have 6 conditions and then provisions allowing the Secretary of State to vary the conditions as they wish and probation to initiate re-imprisonment if the licence conditions are breached (recall) or 'you otherwise pose a risk to the public.'

However additional 'bespoke' licence conditions, relating to the reason of imprisonment, can be added to the licence. These can include prohibiting contact with certain people, requiring a person to either not leave or not enter certain areas, not to engage in certain



activities, to undertake certain programmes (such as drug testing), to abide by a curfew etc. The licence remains until the end of the sentence, however the conditions are supposedly meant to be relaxed gradually over the period of licence.

Following the Criminal Justice Act 2003, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) became a more forceful weapon to use against people who are released from prison. MAPPA is supposedly only reserved for the most dangerous prisoners, but as anyone with an experience of prison will tell you, there is a wide gulf between how the Criminal Justice System define dangerous, and what the popular understanding of the term is.

There are three MAPPA categories. Cat. 1 is for Registered Sex Offenders, Cat. 2. is for violent and other sexual offenders and Cat. 3 is for 'other offenders assessed as posing a risk of serious harm to the public.'<sup>iii</sup>

Whilst there is some confusion within the Criminal Justice System itself as to what constitutes violence – criminal damage, for example the act of spray-painting

graffiti on a wall is erroneously classified by probation as a 'violent offence', and thus may allow a Cat. 2 categorisation, Korean Logie, a Senior Probation Officer at the London Probation Trust notes that in reference to my case 'according to the guidance, animal rights campaigners of this ilk should be treated as Cat[.] 3 MAPPA cases.'

This guidance probably extends to others the state considers 'violent extremists': environmentalists, trade unionists, anti-war activists, people that oppose the arms trade, anti-nuclear activists, justice campaigners, anti-fascists, civil rights advocates, anti-capitalists, anarchists, Welsh & Scottish separatists etc.

Each of these three categories then works at three levels of 'risk' with 1 being the lowest risk the prisoner poses and 3 being the highest: 'reserved for the critical few who present a risk of serious harm in the community.'<sup>iv</sup> For those that are considered level 2 or 3 'risk' cases a monthly panel meeting takes place, as well as emergency meetings, in with the Multi-Agencies come together and share information about the prisoner.

These agencies will be directly related

to interest in the specific case but can include representatives from Her Majesty's Prisons, probation, the police, the Job-centre, 'local education authorities, local housing authorities, registered social landlords, social services, strategic health authorities, Care Trusts and NHS Trusts, and electronic monitoring providers.' In fact, the only person who cannot attend these meetings is the subject of interest: the prisoner being discussed!

For political activists the Multi-Agencies will include government officials from such departments as the Home Office and Department of Work and Pensions, officers from the local police force and members of CO15 (Counter Terrorist Command) of the police. CO15 was launched in 2006 after a merger between the notorious Special Branch and the Anti-Terrorist Branch employing more staff and classifying political activism alongside murderous terrorism.

The prisoner will be assigned a designated CO15 officer, who is routinely rotated, and who they never meet and have no direct contact with. The justification for why someone is considered such a standard is never explained, and precisely what happens at these meetings and what is discussed is never revealed.

Probation has little belief in the rehabilitative effects of prison and it seems the first month or so of a prisoners release is the critical stage for probation to judge a prisoner's character. As licence conditions should allegedly be relaxed over time in proportion to the prisoner's licence period so too should the MAPPA categorisation.

I was on licence for approximately 22

“There is a wide gulf between how the Criminal Justice System de ne dangerous, and what the popular understanding of the term is.”

months – soon after my release I was given a MAPPA 3 categorisation at a level 2 risk. After six months, and despite two of these months being spent in HMP Brixton after I was recalled due to an alleged licence breach, my MAPPA categorisation was 'de-activated.' However, I was never informed of this and throughout my licence period still assumed that I was being discussed at regular panel meetings.

Though MAPPA gets 'de-activated' it is of minor relevance. When it comes to political activists, the interest of probation's 'management' is to isolate them from their culture and stop them politically organising and expressing their views. They will still keep in regular contact with members of CO15 to see if any new intelligence has arisen, such as photographs of a prisoner on a peaceful lawful demonstration that allows them to initiate a recall to prison.

Any interest or movement towards political activity that is expressed to a probation officer then gets relayed to the designated CO15 officer. I asked repeatedly over a period of months to be allowed to volunteer at a local charity that provides low cost veterinary treatment for pet animals and never received a response further than "I still need to follow that up." Subsequently it has emerged that the charity's details were passed over to CO15 for investigation.

Likewise, probation will also liaise with the local police's Borough Intelligence Unit (BIU) to see if the prisoner has popped up on their radar; perhaps they stopped and

searched him. Interestingly, the BIU may actually use a Google search to improve their intelligence. The 'Offender Manager' will also attend regular 'Supervision' meetings in which staff within probation itself will come together to discuss the 'management' of the prisoner.

As with MAPPA, the prisoner cannot attend these meetings. At one of these meetings for my case Simon Cornwall, a Senior Probation Officer from the Central Extremist Unit of probation (which has now mutated into the Extremism and Hate Crime Unit) gave a lecture around that old chestnut of how animals liberated from farms and laboratories die because they are not use to the outside environment. I would love to see the evidence that supports this argument!

Not only does this seem a rather crude attempt at ideological manipulation but an incredible use of resources, considering the unique circumstances of my case. Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately, I doubt probation has much call of interest in animal liberationists in South East London. Probation also wrote to the three Members of Parliament in my local borough relating that I had been released from prison.



Although it was never explained to me exactly why I was considered such a dangerous individual and such a risk to the public, subsequent research has revealed a few tricks probation will use to justify these standings. It appears one of the biggest reasons in my case was that the interest of 'domestic and international media' though I believe the sum media interest was that of two local, syndicated newspapers reporting my arrest and trial. Probation has never provided any evidence to the contrary. This media interest was encouraged to a large degree by the police.

First they purposely released the address of an animal sanctuary I volunteered at as my home address so that it would receive unwanted press attention, and then during my trial a reporter would turn up towards the end of the day and liaise directly with the Detective Sergeant present to get the "scoop." Media interest was constructed by the Criminal Justice System and then I was penalised as a result of it.

In another case, a political prisoner was considered a 'high risk to the public' because they had used a megaphone on demonstrations, and they might, in the future, 'intimidate people on a megaphone.' Because of these reasons the CJS designates political activity as 'dangerous' and 'serious' posing a 'high risk to the public' and compares it to extremely violent offences like rape and murder.

Perhaps the most despotic aspect of the probation-prisoner relationship is the ability to place bespoke conditions on the licence.

Within the initial months of my release I had four different licences, each one with more conditions than the last. I was never

given any explanation as to why conditions kept getting added, but it seems as if they were trying to perfect the maximum amount of conditions they could get away with to seriously impact on my personal life.

Part of the conditions on any licence for political prisoners is, in the words of the licence itself, designed 'to frustrate political activity and manage risk.' Some political prisoners have found themselves forced to live in bail hostels, and attend daily registration, despite the fact that they have suitable family homes to live in, and there is an abject shortage of hostels forcing some general prisoners to sleep on the streets when they are released.

Finally, they settled on the additional licence conditions and they were as follows:

- Notify your supervising officer prior to any contact or relationship with individuals or organisations engaged in demonstrations or activity concerned with Animal Welfare or the Rights of Animals, unless otherwise instructed by your supervising officer.
- Not to use a computer or other electronic device for the purpose of accessing the internet or have access to instant messaging services or any on line message board/forum or community without prior approval of your supervising officer.
- Not to enter within one (1) mile of Highgate Farm, Highgate Lane, Normanby-By-Spital, Market Rasen, LH8 2HQ. Lincolnshire, without the prior approval of your supervising officer.
- Not to use a computer or other electronic device for the purpose of accessing the

“Perhaps the most despotic aspect of the probation-prisoner relationship is the ability to place bespoke conditions on the licence.”



internet or to have access to to any internet messaging services or other internet message board/forum or community without the prior permission of your supervising officer. You must permit reasonable access to any electronic devices to permit technical checks.

- Not to contact directly or indirectly any employee or associates of Huntingdon Life Sciences in Woolley Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, without the prior approval of your supervising officer.
- Not to own or possess or permit in your address any computer without the prior approval of your supervising officer.
- Not to own or possess more than one mobile telephone or SIM card and to provide your supervising offer with the details of that mobile telephone, including the IMEI number and the SIM card that you possess.

Of course, these licence conditions had a huge impact on my life as someone whose entire adult life has resolved around relationships with non-human animals. The first condition is so vast and so vague it prohibits potentially tens of

“The licence granted them the power to re-imprison me for something I would have no knowledge of or involvement with.”

thousands, perhaps millions, of relationships and interactions.

It stopped me from attending vegetarian restaurants, making donations to charity, even reporting an animal in distress to the RSPCA. Heck, if I saw a crime taking place such as badger baiting or fox hunting I would be breaching my licence, and liable to recall to prison if I reported it to the police’s Wildlife Crime Unit. From the outset of these conditions I ceased to use a mobile phone as I understood that the licence turned a mobile phone from a tool of communication to a tracking device.

The IMEI number is a unique code that identifies individual devices and if the authorities possessed that then they would be able to intercept my communications. The following year my views were substantiated when the Guardian published an article on the covert surveillance of individuals through their mobile phones.<sup>vi</sup> I was simply not prepared to allow them to, and did not think it was right for them to, keep tabs on me as I corresponded with solicitors or went to the doctors for example.

During the time of my licence period I was living at home with my family, and although this was encouraged by probation, however it posed a challenge for them as the house had a number of devices capable of accessing the internet and they do not yet have the power to limit family members access to these devices.

They came to the compromise that I

could live there but must permit them access to check these computers, with Simon Cornwall, from the Central Extremist Unit informing me that “if any material is found relating to animal rights, regardless of who has accessed it [such as a family member], you will be held responsible.” The licence granted them the power to re-imprison me for something I would have no knowledge of or involvement with.

At least in writing there is some limitation on the fanatical excesses of licence conditions. To comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, and its incorporation into law by the Human Rights Act 1998, the Ministry of Justice details that ‘[I]licence conditions should be preventative as opposed to punitive and must be proportionate, reasonable and necessary.’<sup>vii</sup> Clearly the impact of the conditions above is none of these, but the careful wording of the licence disguises this.

Most of the conditions have a suffix that states that these designated activities cannot be acted upon unless with ‘prior approval from the probation officer’, so in writing they are saying that in theory you can go and feed the ducks in the park, search for jobs on the internet, use it to research probation and your rights, or volunteer at a local dog shelter, as long as you notify the probation officer.

However, when you actually start asking probation officers you find out pretty quickly they have no interest in even considering your requests. They will relate the information back to their handlers at CO15 and the police will direct them to say “no”.

One political prisoner asked repeatedly to do work with animal



charities and environmental groups which were denied with the provision from probation that they could work for 'organisations involved in human issues.' When a position was found with a non-partisan legal advice charity this was refused by probation as the directive had come through that the prisoner was not allowed to do anything for "a cause."

After a number of requests I managed to tease out the case notes of my time on probation through a Subject Access Request under Section 7 (1) of the Data Protection Act (1998). Through reading this material it seems their belief of my risk in "reoffending" appeared to fluctuate between medium and high risk depending on my commitment to education and my attitude towards the licence conditions.

When I showed participation in furthering

my education they lowered their assessment. This was nonsensical as at the time of the action I was imprisoned for took place and during my subsequent arrest I was in full time education. In fact, it was probation's colleagues in the Crown Prosecution Service with their fanatical desire to oppose all but the strictest bail conditions that meant for a whole year I was unable to continue my studies.

Likewise, in the final stages of my licence it appears that unable to demonstrate how animal rights is an illegitimate cause their strategy was to convince me of the importance in peaceful and/or legal campaigning. This was negated by the fact that before my imprisonment I had collected petitions, written to newspapers, peacefully picketed, leafleted, run information stalls, worked at vegan outreach events, volunteered at

animal sanctuaries etc. and their licence conditions meant they would imprison me for participating in any of these activities.

The issue is simple. Probation has too much power over a prisoner once they are released from prison. This power is then deferred to the police, who grind the organ to implement severely life curtailing restrictions aimed at disrupting and damaging the prisoner's life so much that they are intimidated from continuing legitimate political activity.

As the period on licence is the last part of the prisoner's punishment, you would assume it is the time when the state takes a more measured view of them. They have received the judicial sentence and served their time within prison. All that remains is for the prisoner to reintegrate with wider society and to finally prove that they have been rehabilitated. As can be seen, this fairy-tail of the Criminal Justice System is a long way from the truth.

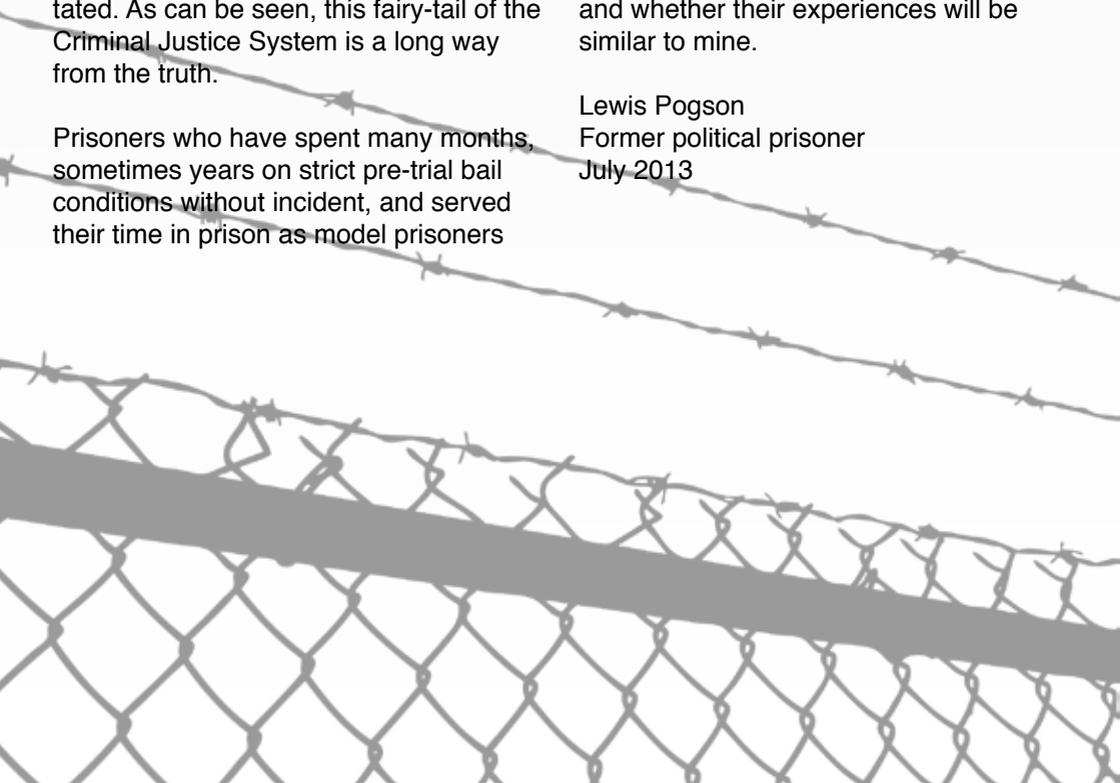
Prisoners who have spent many months, sometimes years on strict pre-trial bail conditions without incident, and served their time in prison as model prisoners

find that when they are released, as opposed to being reformed, the system has heightened their standing as dangerous individuals.

The irony of it all is that for political prisoners, instead of resolving problems linked to activism and encouraging them to develop broader life interests, probation, and its interference by the police maintains the conditions for activism whilst simultaneously politicising the prisoner.

Currently, there are proposals to privatise probation in some areas, tending contracts to either private companies or community and charity groups, maintaining the public Probation Trust to work only with 'high-risk offenders and public protection cases'<sup>viii</sup> i.e. MAPPA cases and political prisoners. This means that it is unclear what will happen to political prisoners in the future and whether their experiences will be similar to mine.

Lewis Pogson  
Former political prisoner  
July 2013



# INTERVIEW WITH BEN WILSON

Ex-prisoner Ben talks about the reality of life when you're electronically tagged by the state

**How much of your sentence did you serve in jail & how much are you doing on tag?**

I got 2 years 5 months. I served 10 months and a couple of days, and I'll do 4 months minus a couple of days on tag. So it's normally you serve half your sentence, and then part of this can be on tag. Conditions change from person to person on tag. I'm on standard. The main thing is the curfew. I have to be in the house at a certain time and I can't leave. This is covered by my electronic tag which maps the area of my house.

**Is this typical?**

They are talking about making tag longer, up to 6 months. Now, if your sentence is more than 5 years you can't get it, but this will change. The main reason is that all the prisons are full to bursting. In Horfield every cell was doubled up, except for gay people, dangerous prisoners or people under 21. If you were on the top floor you never got access to the library, as everyone on lower floors got the places. You had to really fight just to get a book. The whole thing with taking more tag time is to reduce the amount of people in the prisons so they have more space.

**How is the experience of being on tag different from being in prison?**

I was in Oakwood for 7 months of the 10. A G4S prison. It had just opened so they didn't have a fuckin clue what was going on. Each wing had set screws who stayed



on it, with an OMU (Offender Management Unit). It's very important to see them as soon as possible to get things like tag and categorisations sorted. They are massively overworked and switched around, so you never see them. You can't get anything sorted. There were so many operational things like that that were bodged. It wasn't just us, it was the staff as well, they didn't get any breaks and were expected to come in with no notice, or risk not getting more overtime/holidays. The one level higher was fucking over everything whether you were incarcerated or staff. So yeah, G4S two thumbs down.

**What are your restrictions on tag?**

When you see probation officer, it's not just you can't break the law, you aren't allowed to "misbehave" or associate with anyone who might be likely to misbehave....so I'm screwed really!

Basically if my name gets back to the police or there is a disturbance in my house and it gets back to probation, even if I'm not involved, they don't even have to do a review, I can just get recalled

straight away. Probation have the power to play god, they don't even have to go to court. It's not even a matter of them proving I've broken my licence conditions, if probation decide I'm not doing enough to "reintergrate into society" I can be recalled straight away, without a solicitor. A standard licence recall would last for 28 days, then it would go to Magistrates Court, or a probation officer might fight on your behalf. They are trying to change it so that when this happens you have the opportunity to go to mags the next day, but now it's not the case. I'm lucky, my probation officer is alright. He leaves me to it. I report to him once every 6 weeks.

The whole probation experience is "overstretched" in a word, they are expected to do a hell of a lot. I don't think they have the resources to take on the workload. From my experience -and this goes against my nature- I have found them to be generally helpful. My probation officer said he doesn't want me to go back to prison. He said if I tell him I've taken drugs he wont send me back straight awy, he wants to help me. To a certain extent I believe him. If I said I was taking mandy [MDMA] every day I think he would try to get me to engage me in a programme. I think it hasn't been a positive experience but it has been handled well.

I obviously can't do drugs or crime of any sort, but I don't have limits on my associations in terms of named individuals. My crime wasnt ot do with that [specific people who are known to the state] so I'm ok, unless your going to misbehave!

On tag, if you want the garden to be added on you must say you started smoking and you want to be able to go outside to smoke, otherwise you are not allowed outside. Nothing else will work. When

they challenge you, say its a basic human right. My hours have just been extended so they'll stay like this till I finish. The minimum amount of hours "on tag" [restricted to the home] is 9, so if you can find someone with a business or something to write you a letter they'll extend it.

### **How does it make you feel?**

I'm completely at ease with it, or else I'd be angry all the time. Now my tag is extended I can be out from 7am-9pm. It's not just the going out of an evening. It's being able to go away for a bit. To get out of the city. When you weigh it up I could be here or in prison. Its much better to be here. I think it depends from person to person. I can see it could really eat away at you. I'm really lucky here, the house is just full of my friends. I've got a really supportive network. They wanted to put me into "half way house" [bail hostel], where I'd have had to stay for the whole 4.5 months on tag, living with other people who have just been released. They said because I didn't have familiy in Bristol I couldn't move here but my probation officer fought my corner. I'd have been so depressed there [in the half way house], I'd have probably wanted to go back to prisnon to be honest.

### **What are some of the emotional impacts of being on tag?**

It's been quite hard to form a solid relationship with someone. Trying to meet up with people and do things like that is hard. How does it make me feel about myself? I don't mind having a bit of fun with it. When I was doing my housing benefit forms I had to go to that god awful office on Cabot's Circus. I was in there for ages. He sat me down. I said "I've just come out of prison I'm on tag", I showed

him, and he said sign that, there ya go! So it has benefits.

**Do you feel like prison had an emotional impact on you, in terms of repressing emotions or being withdrawn?**

I think its a time to re-evaluate. It illuminates life's little pictures. You can understand everything a bit better, like what you need to do to get on in life. This is something I didnt appreciate before. Things like sleeping patterns and washing everyday. Stupid little things, but because its so regimented, it makes you appreciate those things a bit more.

**How do you deal with disclosure in terms of friends and work?**

I'm still friends with all the same people so it's fine – I get a bit of sympathy! I'm lucky, a friend of a friend was looking for someone to work for him. He also has a criminal record, so he took me on. It would have been a nightmare trying to get another officie job, so I was lucky!

**How have you been supported? How have you supported yourself?**

People have been non-judemental and offered to lend me money till I get back on my feet. People in my house left me some presents, like beers, and people are generally just completely ok. Not weird. Thats a credit to the social circles I move in rather than wider society. I don't think this is a normal reaction.

**So tag/prison hasn't had a massive mental impact on you?**

I haven't got the energy to be angry. I could be. I could think, it's so unfair, it's my first offence.

But what's the point in trying to change the past? I dont want to be angry.

I think if you are illiterate or not confident with the written word you don't stand a hope in hell. Everything is paper submitted, theres no guide. You have to write eloquently, theres no tick boxes. That's the way the majority of people are treated. You have to put in an application, with no receipt. It's on their whim whether or not it exists or if they want to address it. Then you get a reply, normally related, but never answering your actually question. Then you have to submit a "Comp 1", reiterating your request -for example something out of your property.

They tell you how many items you're allowed but not the answer for your specific question. They often just ignore you, fob you off and you have to complain again and again. It can be really demoralising. You might just want a book or computer game. This is the stuff that made me angry, not so much tag,

**How has behaviour you established in prison continued or effected you now you are on tag?**

The structure of the day, and being able to get up early, is good. I never liked getting up early after the age of 12. Now I have a bit more drive, a bit more ambition. It's a bi-product of prison, it's the re-evaluation side of it. Reflecting on stuff.

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# STATE REPRESSION : SELF REPRESSION

Ex-prisoner Nicole Vosper talks about the unexpected emotional impacts of prison & repression after a 3.5 year sentence

It was only until about 5 months after coming 'off license' that I allowed myself to feel the harm of the prison system on myself. My empathy was always there for my friends and allies I shared wings and cells with. My solidarity with those imprisoned, human and nonhuman, crystal clear and carried in every cell of my body.

But what about myself? I didn't think repression had had much of an effect, at least in terms of what the state desired. My politics were hardened, my resolve stronger and my fear of organising surprisingly absent as I planned actions, gatherings and radical encounters without fear of consequence or a return spell inside.

I related to the last 5.5 years of restrictive bail, prison and license conditions with

detachment. The rationale of it all made entire sense - the state wanted to keep me & my co-defendants out of action for as long as possible, and used a skilful mixture of repressive bail conditions (not being allowed to do an animal rights campaigning or engage with those doing so), intentional delays and extensions to court appearances, control within the prison system around relationships with co-defendants and the general repressive regime, followed by 21 months of license conditions that kept me well and truly isolated from the movement I had grown up in and basically controlled through fear of re-call to prison. The five year ASBO was the cherry on the cake to ensure I didn't take up the reigns of the SHAC or any vivisection campaign again anytime soon.

In this article however I don't want to



focus on those political connotations, I want to (big gulp) talk about the emotional effects of it all, something often unspoken in the social struggle subculture of machismo and bravado.

## Self-censoring

One of the main things I realised when coming off license was how much I had self-censored through the experience, in terms of near perfect management of what I disclosed to who, why and when. To the grandparents prison was a 'perfect time to focus on my education' as I settled their nerves and concerns about its impact, for mates it was the 'Isle of Lesbos' full of single queer women to have a laugh with, to the animal rights movement it was something I could do 'standing on my head' so that others didn't fear taking direct action for animal liberation and to probation it was always the bare minimum to get through the appointments.

For those that were really close to me, who knew me inside out and had supported me while I was inside, it was silence mainly, perhaps the odd expressive slip through a superficial face. Every prison visit it felt like their was a frog in my throat and I simply couldn't express what was going on inside. And so through state violence, you effectively close your self off and shut yourself down to expressing your rage, fear, anger, hopelessness, grief or whatever is in you at the time.

A weird power dynamic emerges between

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you and those supporting you. You have the ability to let them know as little or as much as you like about how you're feeling through the physical separation you experience. You can choose to only call them on good days, you can choose what to write, you can choose to bite your tongue during visits and by god you get good at hiding how you feel to every single person you encounter. I would never want the screws to have any more power over me than they did, my whole sentence I vowed that they would never see me cry or kick off as a result of their actions. This makes sense in terms of survival when you're in, but what about when you're out? How do these patterns of self-censoring continue to effect you?

## Trashing trust and loathing love: repression in relationships

Its hard enough to have healthy relationships in our unhealthy culture, however the the screw of self-repression is certainly turned tighter by the state.

A whole myriad of fears, questions and concerns start to influence relationships, for example not wanting to engage with long term committed relationships for fear that if you yourself go back to prison and what if your partner leaves you before/

during your sentence, cheats on you while you're inside (even if you're in a poly relationship, there isn't exactly an even power balance). Fear they grass on you. Fear of them being harmed by the experience e.g. not coping, finding the raid(s) traumatising, feeling suicidal, self harm behaviours to cope with the stress etc.

Or the scenario of your partner going to prison and you fear that you will not be able to commit over the long haul, that you may let them down, that they/you will change and you will separate. That they self harm in prison/get a rough ride and you blame yourself depending on your experiences of organising/power relationships. That they will cheat on you in prison. That they will push you away because they don't want you to have to go through the experience of supporting them. That your continuing of being an organiser will affect their freedom e.g. ability to access parole, license conditions that will restrict them/you, their heightened fear of repression.

My point is that, once prison becomes part of your life, a whole new set of fear-based filters get applied to relationships, and again the state are succeeding in trying to socially isolate and weaken you.

Trying to explain the reality of license conditions, where you're effectively banned from seeing 99% of the people you love is really hard. I'm only really processing the reality of it slowly. I know I'm not alone in not being allowed to see someone I was in love with. Like I used to say in prison, they could put you on a tropical island, with all your favourite foods and CDs, but if you can't love the people you love how can you ever feel free? It feels like the state stole that relationship and will no doubt play a role

“My point is that, once prison becomes part of your life, a whole new set of fear-based filters get applied to relationships, and again the state are succeeding in trying to socially isolate and weaken you.”

in new relationships.

The above fears are not just with intimate relationships either, obviously your trust in previous working partners or groups may be affected. You may return to a movement 5 years later and barely know some of the core organisers, campaigns or approaches anymore. Its like a weird time warp where it feels like everything and nothing has changed.

### **Stripping your identity & repressing your sense of self**

The state knows that there is power in solidarity, in comradeship, in a shared culture of resistance. Prison tries to systematically strip you of that. This could be anything from censoring of publications, access to books and radical materials. I was only ever allowed about 8 CDs because they said my music was too political. The recent conditions around not being able to communicate with anyone concerned with animal welfare is a clear attempt at intense social isolation and removal from ones community, a tool of the state since time began.

Without solidarity, they will be successful. This is why prisoner support work is so important.

In anarchist or community organising subcultures, at least in my experience, your identity starts to correlate with what you do, rather than who you are in all your messy imperfection. Your sense of self worth rests heavily on what you 'get



done', whether that's a new zine or a liberation. So when you land in jail, you have to go through a whole new self-processing experience. You can't be busy any more. Most of us will end up organising and agitating in jail in one way or another, but your levels of activity or so much less than 'on the out' and way more of your life is dedicated to survival and getting through the prison regime.

### **The emotional affects of 'absence'**

When you're under restrictive bail or license conditions, it feels like you've basically disappeared. Unless you're seeing people clandestinely, which is stressful enough in itself, you're not on the radar. The movement carries on anyway and busy people get busier. Left to swim in the murky waters of pre-prison and post-prison life, you're all but invisible until you hit that prisoner list and suddenly you're worth the time of day.

Once you're out, and potentially off license and able to talk about your experiences, you feel faced with an intimidating subculture and a maze of disclosure confusion.

When meeting new people you may find yourself asking yourself, do they know me? What do they think of the campaign I was involved in? Did they read my letters in prisoner support magazines etc...? This can go either way e.g. they don't like you/ disagree with your actions/are uncomfortable/intimidated by you.... or they think it's 'really cool' you've been inside and you're some sort of status symbol/hero that's cool to know. Both are as bad as each other on a personal level when you're just wanting to be accepted for who you are.

You don't want to talk about prison because you don't want everyone to know your life story, nor do you want to appear like you're 'dropping it in' as some kind of anarchist badge. But alternatively it's hard to know what to talk about. When I first got out, it was like well I just spent nearly 2 years in that place, all of my mates are there, all the funny stories. That is my history and I don't want to forget it or pretend that it didn't happen. I found myself talking about hardcore shows that were like 4 years ago because I'd been so out of the scene, or bands that had broken up when I was in and I

embarrassingly didn't know. So its like this weird time thing in your life that you're worried about talking about too much/too little.

People are nervous to ask questions so then its almost like a dissociation with the whole thing/just blocking it out. If you share a prison story it immediately ignites that question about your past and instead of acknowledging your life/history you fear becoming an 'activist' that lives on the reputation of their time on the inside. For the really heavy stuff you've experienced or witnessed you don't have the desire to pass the pain parcel, for fear of being coloured by heaviness.

All of this becomes quite emotionally exhausting as you constantly decipher what to disclose and what to repress or disengage with.

### **People need people: Resisting repression**

If you go to prison, or support someone who has, you will no doubt be effected and changed by the experience.

My suggestion for anyone coming out of prison and faced with any of the above fears, challenges and patterns of self repression is to find some kind of safe space to talk about your feelings. Whether that's counselling or a close friend you can really trust. Try to create a space where you won't minimise what you have witnessed and experienced, where you won't be eclipsed by machismo or subculture politics, and where you won't be judged by friends, previous or new partners while you're working things out.

The irony of the self-repression through state repression, the heightened fear of relationships and intimacy is that if there

is one thing you learn in prison is that people need people. We need love, we need friendships, we need intimacy and pleasure and spooning more than you could fucking believe. On a movement level it means we need mutual aid, solidarity networks, relationship building... I refuse to let the prison system and its relationship to state repression chain my heart any longer.

As the months pass since walking from those gates, I know that I'm remembering the taste of freedom again. The taste of love, the joy of meeting someone you know you're going to fall madly in love with. Am I still afraid? Of course. Do I fear they're going to abandon me the day babylon get their hands on me again? For sure. But to feel the fear and to know the risks but to do it anyway I guess what revolutionary struggle is all about.

And so for anyone reading this I guess what I'm trying to say is, keep expressing yourself, keep loving, if you get hurt, yes it will hurt, and yes in prison it will cut a hundred times deeper, but the only way to heal is through relationships - with yourself, your friends, new and old loved ones. Because the minute you stop feeling, stop loving and start dehumanising yourself and others, then they have really won. This isn't just a war for our political gains, its a war for our hearts and all I can say is keep it beating.

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# LIFE ON PAROLE

Gregg Prevost writes about life on parole in the US

Gregg Prevost – convicted of killing a cop in 1984.

Nov. 1984-Nov. 1985: Provincial District Jail

Nov. 1985-May 1994: Millhaven Maximum Ontario (Happy-Happy place) ha.

May 1994 – Aug. 2002: Joyceville Medium, Ontario

Aug. 2002 – Sept. 2006: Frontenac Minimum Farm Camp

Sept. 2006 – June 2007: Joyceville Medium, Ontario

June 2002 – June 2009: Pittsburgh Minimum, Ontario

June 2009 – December 2009: Day Parole, Montreal, Quebec

December 2009 – present: Federal Training Fraud Factory, Laval, Quebec (a.k.a. Federal Training Centre)

First time I saw the National Parole Board was in 2005. I was granted escorted passes, we call them ETA's, for shopping and "personal development". Under guard escort, I went to local grocery stores to shop for myself and my five housemates (we were allotted \$4.35 per day for food). On other passes, I would go out and help with "projects" in the community.

In 2006 I was eligible for unescorted passes (UTA's; furloughs, leaving prison by myself for up to 72 hours). Most people get a community assessment at their home and to to the halfway house where they plan to do their day parole. The National Parole Board normally grants 6 UTS's over one year, three home and three to halfway house.

It was different in my case. The 'Ontario' provincial police got involved. They falsified documents saying relatives lived in the community. Each time I would expose the lie, a new excuse was used.

Despite completing my UTA's done over a 4 month period, Correctional Services Canada forced me to wait 9 months to ask for my day parole. That is, they stalled. On UTA's you can't look for work or anything so I did little things like get a library card, and learn the metro and bus system. (this is a big deal: I as forced to accept day parole in Montreal because the cops in Ontario wouldn't let me have day parole in that province. I know very little French. My wife lived in Ontario and I had spent my 24 years in jail building up contacts on the outside in Kingston, Ontario. In the end, I was forced to move to Quebec, and not allowed to see anyone in my family. They all live in Ontario and the Ontario police forbid me from returning to the province.

I had to complete my UTAs in Montreal, Quebec, a distance of about 200 miles from my Ontario jail. Normally UTA's connect you to family and friends. Mine just wasted my money. I was forced to pay for part of the travel costs from Kingston, Ontario where I was in jail, to Montreal, where I was visiting a halfway house with the hope of getting out on day parole.

There was a project around at the time called LifeLine, where lifers who had been granted parole came back inside and helped others with reintegration. LifeLine helped me pay for the travel costs to Montreal and it was a lifer who drove me back and forth from Kingston to Montreal.

They knew how I felt. They'd been

through it themselves. However, LifeLine doesn't exist anymore. Harper cut the program. Now you have to pay for the costs of UTA's on your own. If you don't have any money, you sit in jail and don't get any UTA's. Despite no pay increase for the past 20 years, this situation will only get worse with the recent 33% decrease in pay for people incarcerated in Canadian prisons!

So my day parole was in a French-speaking province where I knew no one. Despite this I had full time work, a car, all my ID's etc. But, after the initial thrill of being out wore off, I got lonely. In Quebec, prisoners on parole are generally not allowed to talk to anyone with a criminal record. So I couldn't speak to anyone I met in the halfway house. I couldn't make friends with the people I was being forced to live with because once I left the house, I wasn't allowed to even walk to the bus with them.

I have a drinking problem.

In Ontario, they only sell beer at one store. It has short hours. Liquor is sold at a different store. In Quebec, they sell booze almost everywhere, including corner stores.

I gave in to temptation and drank and once caught I was put back inside.

I'm a Native and a prison psychiatrist once wrote on an evaluation: "Mr. Prevost is of Metis descent, so clearly the risk that he will reoffend will greatly increase with substance abuse".

Now, the NPB thinks I'm at risk of reoffending. On top of that, the Ontario cops send two cops dressed in ceremonial uniforms all the way to Quebec to sit in on my Parole Board

hearings. I have seen the board twice since returning to jail. Twice with full support of five prison employees including my parole officer, a psychologist, staff at the halfway house etc. I've been denied parole twice. This despite the fact that since my return Dec 2009, I have completed over 250 successful ETA's at my the time of my last hearing.

I was finally allowed to go home. It was my first time home in 27 years. I was forced to go with two guards. We spent 22 hours in a car. When we arrived I was locked in a hole cell in a provincial jail for a total of 24 hours (two 12 hours "stays") (stripped naked twice, and put in an orange jumpsuit). All this for a short 6.5 hour visit with my 75 year old folks, in our kitchen, with two guards sitting in our living room.

One positive note; the police for years implied that my community would explode if I was allowed a visit home with my folks (who are well respected people; never in trouble). In reality, I was greeted by guards at the jail with handshakes and stories about my parents.

So I'm still considered too dangerous to go back to a halfway house, but I leave the prison five times a week to volunteer at a community centre where there are 60 kids in day camp.

I'm now 51 years old.

Yours truly,

Gregg Prevost

Long term job justification unit #416226

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# SUPPORTING SOMEONE LEAVING PRISON

This article explores the main learnings from the last decade of supporting friends & allies leaving prison

I write this article as an ex-prisoner and someone who has supported numerous friends and partners leaving prison for over more than a decade. These loved ones have been both 'political' and 'social' prisoners and the lines are likely to blur in this article as it becomes clear that all prisoners share many common challenges and oppressions.

## 1. Everyone is unique

Prison treats you like a commodity. Nothing in your interaction recognises you as an individual. Therefore a part of healing from being in prison is about remembering your individuality, or re-humanising yourself after state attempts to dehumanise you. My first point then is that whoever you are supporting from leaving jail, is ultimately going to have unique needs/desires/ways of interacting that this article may or may not apply to.

Recognising diversity and uniqueness then, there really is no certain way of ensuring support in the first few days leaving prison. Your friend may crave a huge party and see everyone they know and have a total joyful blowout, or perhaps more likely, they may wish to take things slow and get acclimatised slowly to 'freedom' on the out.



## 2. Ask them what they need & desire!

My second point relating to the first few days and beyond is just actually asking them what they need and desire. Is there anything they'd enjoy doing? What do they crave? Are there any places they'd like to go? People to see? How have they been fantasising about their first day out? What would they like to eat?

Obviously don't bombard them with questions, but generally take their queue. They will have likely spent day after day, month after month, maybe even year after year never being asked what they felt because it doesn't matter to the prison system.

## 3. Practical solidarity

In their first few days, unless they're walking out into their own flat that housing had sorted for them in jail, with a new job with all their groovy qualifications from prison and enough savings from their



sentence to embrace rehabilitated existence (apologies for the sarcasm)... they will most likely need to sign on at the job centre and go on a mission fighting for whatever they need, whether that's a crisis loan, somewhere to stay if they're not in a bail hostel or with a friend, to opening a bank account and more.

There are likely to be a whole host of practical things that need to get sorted. This can be stressful and dehumanising. After however many months being talked to like shit by a screw, the last thing you feel like doing is being talked down to by an officer in the job centre who also thinks you're a piece of shit. On being released from captivity from the state you're likely to continue to have to interact with them in different forms.

So therefore my point is if you as a support person can get as much of this stuff organised as possible before someone is released (as far as advance as possible to save them from sleepless nights), you're friend/lover/comrade is likely to be in a much better place emotionally when they are spat out of HMP.

Therefore think about stuff like:

- Bank accounts e.g. getting forms & ID together
- Job centre/benefits claiming - things like just knowing the right number to call & where to go etc.
- Housing
- A new phone and sim
- A list of places to apply for grants/organisations that can offer support (few and far between but still may be useful)
- If you're going in to new housing where

- you can by cheap/recycled furniture etc
- Transport and so forth, even if you drive they may be dependent on the bus so having timetables to hand is a help
- A diary
- Depending on what you're getting out to clothes/belongings from previous places and so forth

All of this stuff is stressful and frustrating when you get out, when all you want to do is go to some woodland or collapse in the arms of a friend, and you know if you don't sort it in time your money won't come through and you'll be left hungry/ at risk of taking risks like shoplifting which is the last thing you want to do on license from prison.

A lot of times when people are inside they bury their head in the sand about the above stuff because they don't want to think about it (as its too demoralising and frustrating trying to sort it in prison), but its worth checking in with them about it and doing as much as you can of it, without them thinking its a burden for you.

Ultimately money is a big one, you get kicked out with a small discharge grant and a travel warrant, and until you land in the job centre you're living on about £36 I believe, so money that's available to help get through the first few days is a massive help.



On a personal note, if you're supporting someone who may be at risk of using drugs (and say for example has been clean inside and are committed to not using) then having too much money offered to them can be more of a hindrance than a help, the temptation is pretty great then to spend it on drugs/ blowing out, so having just enough to get buy is preferred. Or having it in small bits over a few weeks.



Accepting money can be pretty embarrassing, so any ways you can 'embody' this the better. For example buying a phone credit voucher rather than giving someone the cash direct, or saying you skipped some food/had loads of surplus etc. No one wants to feel like a burden or charity case.

On another practical note is what happens when they walk out those gates. Even if they've done only a couple of weeks getting a picked up is a big difference to being left to get the train on your own. So make an effort to collect them, and be there on time!!! And ideally confirm all of this way before their release date so they can leave with a sense of certainty rather than fear you won't show.

Sometimes there can be a bit of a competition about who meets someone from the gates, it can bring out all sorts of senses of entitlement, with rivalling mothers, girlfriends, best mates and so forth. If you're confused, ask them!! And don't take offence if you're not the first person they want to see, it doesn't mean they don't love you or need you or value their support, they just might be craving a certain person or the energy they carry.

#### 4. Emotional support

Again this section is totally unique to the person. Some people may open up really easily and others may find talking about their feelings the hardest thing in the world. Everyone has had different experiences in prison. You have to judge it on your loved one/comrade and how you have interacted with them so far. However I will emphasis a couple of points:

**\*Space** - being enclosed in a cell makes you very aware of space in general. Prison is a weird dichotomy of space - you have none, in the sense that you have no where to go outside, your physical space is severely limited. If you're sharing a cell your personal space is likely zero. If however you've been in a single cell you may actually get used to spending a lot of time on your own. You have a huge amount of 'head space' due to your confinement.

Therefore having access to space 'on road' is really important. Not being totally overwhelmed with people all the time, or having the pressure to socially interact is important. Even just making your own room nice is a simple pleasure that can carve out a bit of time on your own to process what is likely to be a whirlwind of a few days.

For friends I have supported that have

served significantly longer term sentences, space seems to be the sustaining factor in their mental health. Being able to escape to the city from the mountains, or to have time on their own in the evenings, is increasingly important to create space for healing and processing of all they have been through or witnessed.

**\*Disclosure** - People will ultimately need their own time and space to disclose about how they feel, what they experienced or witnessed in prison. For some it could come out soon after leaving jail, for others it might not hit them until 3 years later when they are off license for example.

Sometimes people like to walk around on eggshells a bit when someone has just got out of jail or even over the long haul, people still feel like they can't ask about their experiences inside. However if you've just got out of jail, that is your reality, those are your friends, that was your day to day life. Its not like a stop-start on a cassette player. So don't be afraid to ask questions. They can make you feel like your experience has been valid. One question like 'how was the food?' might lead to some opening up about another experience, like bullying from a screw or a close friend you used to share your mealtimes with or something.

The worst place to be in is if you can't talk about prison because you think that its not interesting/important, or that you're doing a 'poor me' or something, which can lead to a repression of a huge experience in your life. So I would say go ahead and ask questions but keep them light and open and above all LISTEN.

On another note however be prepared that your loved one may also not like to

talk about prison. It could be the last thing on earth they want to talk about. If so, respect that. Some questions could feel piercingly invasive, re-stimulating or triggering, so just be mindful, but don't let this stop you from starting conversations.

Another point I wanted to make was to not tip toe around them or think because they're an ex-prisoner your thoughts and feelings don't matter. If you need them to help wash up, kick up the ass! If you've had a bad day at work, talk about it. When you've left jail you just wanted to be treated normally, not like some wounded fallen woman. So I would say call them out, don't let them use prison as an excuse to talk down to you/not do things/ be accountable.

**\* Be consistent** - If you've been inside you will know that EVERYONE LIES. The screws constantly lie, probation lie, offender management officers lie, even the girls/guys lie. So this understandably effects your trust in people. So what I would say if you're supporting someone leaving jail is be consistent e.g. be honest and don't lie! If you say you're going to do something, do it! Otherwise you will remind them of the pattern they have witnessed over and over again when promised ship outs, property, visits and so forth by officers that never delivered.

## 6. Intimacy

If you've been inside or have been supporting someone inside who you are an intimate lover/partner to, its likely you've had your fair share of naughty letters describing what you're going to do when you finally get out and be with them again.

However fantasy may not become reality and its worth being conscious of this.

Depending on how long you've done, and the level of intimacy you've experienced inside (for some this is none, maybe a brief hug on a prison visit is all its been for years and years and years), you are going to be able to handle different levels and expectations of intimacy.

Some may very well want an instant fuck more than anything. For others, just being held in someone's harms may be emotionally charging and overwhelming. So again remember uniqueness, and create a space where there is no pressure and they have the opportunity to articulate how they are feeling.

Again, depending on how long someone has done/their experiences inside and so forth, their desire and capacity for a relationship may be different. Simple things many people take for granted, like spooning, feel like a gift from the gods.

Having the confidence to 'pull' may not be there. Even things like tags or curfew mean that going out and meeting your social needs may not be possible.

For someone who's done a significantly long amount of time, rebuilding their sense of self with affection and intimacy, may really be a slow act of solidarity and love. For those that may have prided themselves on being sexually confident before going to prison, or even during their sentence, healing this disconnect may be harder than it sounds when actually what was once easy and straightforward is now physically and emotionally challenging.

Fears around re-call to prison/being let down/harming others or being harmed are all likely to be rocking and rolling around someone's heart who has just left jail. Don't expect to interact with them in

a straightforward way, so be patient and respect their time and space.

I would like to emphasise that prison does leave you feeling hardened in many ways, but also more emotionally vulnerable in other ways. Hooking up with someone then leaving them high and dry might be a usual pattern in many circles, however if someone has just got out of jail, this experience will form part of a mountain of others, and may be enlarged more than you realise (because of trust patterns and so forth). So if you are interacting with someone leaving prison, be patient, be consistent and above all BE HONEST.

Also a key point to make is that people change. Prison changes people, they're not going to come out the same person that you may have fallen in love with. You will have probably been through a lot too. So don't be too hard on yourselves if it isn't all unicorns and roses in those first few nights, months, even years after prison.

## **7. Friendship**

Prisoner support may take different forms, from the sort of intellectual or detached solidarity level, to the feeling of comradeship, to acquaintances, to close mates, best friends and lovers.

If you've done a longish sentence, your friendship circles are likely to have gone upside down inside out. As harsh as it sounds, its most likely that most of the people you were hoping would write or stay in touch didn't, those that did are closer friends than ever, and you are likely to have been betrayed by at least one close friend, and you may or may not have been able to sustain an intimate relationship during your sentence.

Someone you are supporting from leaving prison may or may not disclose the above. Their expectations of certain people may have been higher than you're aware, or you may not know their full history. So its likely to be an emotional whirlwind on release if you are interacting with the same or most likely now different social circles.

My advice to friends who:

- Never got round to writing/visiting - you've probably lost their trust significantly. You can try to apologise & build a friendship again but it may never be the same. Just apologise and be yourself. If you've always been just a mate/casual acquaintance than you're probably easy to interact with and hang out with again.
- Who were supportive and consistent - you've got a friend for life and you may never know really how much your support meant.
- Who let someone down badly or otherwise hurt someone quite significantly - forgiveness isn't necessarily a 'never'. But you will need to SHOW practically over the long haul your regret/shame/sadness and demonstrate that you can be there for them. Its going to take however many years to build up trust again but if you're committed to this you may find your way back into their heart. All is not lost.

## 7. Respect license conditions

Again on a practical level I wanted to emphasise the importance of respecting someone's license conditions. If they need to be back at their bail hostel for 1pm and you're keeping them busy till 12.55pm then that's not a respectful relationship. Ask them what their conditions are and be supportive to make that process as as easy as possible.

For those that may have complicated conditions - such as political prisoners, respect these conditions. If you're meeting someone clandestinely, don't turn up wearing an ALF badge or an antifa patch. What is something you don't think about could be a big anxiety trigger for someone who is not meant to be seeing you. Or at worse, could lead to their re-call. Don't text/email/facebook them if you have a niggling doubt it might not be ok for them to interact with you.

If you walk past them on the street don't stop unless they clearly want to see you and its their call. They may well be under surveillance and no offence to you, but don't want to risk being re-called to prison for a chat on a high street.

However equally if someone is on license meaning they can't engage with you, don't forget about them. Little postcards saying

“Prison treats you like a commodity. Nothing in your interaction recognises you as an individual. Therefore a part of healing from being in prison is about remembering your individuality, or re-humanising yourself after state attempts to dehumanise you.”

you're thinking about them makes a huge difference or even simple things like getting people to all sign a birthday card.

For people on tag leaving jail, tag is like a blessing and a curse. Obviously its better than jail in lots of ways but at the same time inside you may have more friends, and more attention from people you care about. Tags can lead to real isolation, especially if you're tagged by the state for a longish period of time.

If you're supporting someone on tag then I'd suggest making time for them in the evenings. Bringing people over to their place. Make them feel like they are still included and loved in your social group. Don't constantly tempt them with party invites, shows or gigs which they can't go to because of their ankle bracelet. But if you do go, bring them back a momentum, get the band to stay at your house or whatever, just make them feel included.

Again, like with licenses, respect tags! Respect times and curfews. Don't put them under unnecessary stress by picking them up late or missing the train.

## **8. Drop the judgement, cotton wool and the pedestal**

For 'social' prisoners, its not always the badge of honour like in many anarchist or radical circles. There may be significant family shame/embarrassment/emotional pressure/guilt and so forth.

Therefore if you're supporting someone you love leaving jail, try and drop the judgement. They have done their time. They will have been harmed by the state in ways you may never know, and they would have had hour after hour after hour to think about the effects of their actions. So don't hold it to them forever. Belit-

ting them at family events is NOT cool. Rubbing salt in the wound that they have let you down isn't going to change the fact that its happened, and its done and they're sorry.

Trying to keep a broader perspective on harm in general is useful - think about the harm of the prison system, of the wider inequalities and all the other factors rather than putting the weight of the world on your shoulders. If you're especially upset/hurt then access support for yourself, whether that's counselling or a peer support group for people with loved ones in jail.

In terms of cotton wool, its pretty unlikely that most prisoners will be too supported, however its worth noting that there is a deep desire to care for someone who has just left jail. You love them so much you want to do everything you can yesterday to make them feel better. All I'm going to say is give them room to breathe!

The pedestal I guess corresponds with how political prisoners are treated. Obviously its nice to be respected or recognised however drop the pedestal! Its uncomfortable, unwarranted and embarrassing for ex-prisoners that makes it harder to interact in more radical networks. When you suddenly become visible in a movement, perhaps for taking direct action for example or something that would warrant a jail term, many people will put you on a pedestal, set high expectations or otherwise believe you may know what to do about X, Y, Z. This pressure is huge and maybe when someone is ready they may have some insight around next steps, however let them land back to earth and get through their license before diving in at the deep end again.

## 9. Supporting healing over the long haul

Supporting someone leaving prison isn't just about giving them a lift to the job centre the first week they're out. Alleyship is for the long-haul. It may take months/years for someone to feel comfortable to talk about their experiences. The harm the prison system caused them may repeat itself in relationships for years ahead. They may suddenly be triggered a few years down the line when they least expect it and then need to invest time in a healing journey.

All I can say in terms of supporting someone over the long term is:

- give them time & space
- let them make decisions about when they choose to interact with crime/social war/social struggle again
- be prepared for unexpected re-stimulation, for desires for freedom, for fears to surface, longer into the future than you can imagine
- encourage them to do the healing work they need to do - whether that's making a zine, having counselling, getting drunk every night for a few months, whatever it is, let them be, let them work through it and just let them know you're there but it's their journey

- accept that you may never know what someone has really experienced. Some people may not wish to pass the pain parcel of what they've witnessed, for others it is too dark and too raw that it's safer under their skin and remaining a secret in their heart.

But above all remember if you're supporting someone leaving in prison, then you will need support too. Don't become a prisoner to their emotional needs - you have your own, keep expressing them and acting for them. Take time out and hang out with mates. Forgive yourself if something you do triggers or hurts your friend/lover/comrade. We are all learning how to be more resilient to repression.

We need to create cultures of resistance that acknowledge the harm of the prison industrial complex, so that people who have experienced prison, whether for 10 weeks or 10 years, can not feel the fear or shame of expressing themselves, of fucking up, of needing space and yes, for dropping out of movements. The more we encourage a culture of healing, where it is valued and honoured, the more likely we're going to be stronger to fight a new day in abolishing this system that keeps our loved ones in cages.

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# TERMINOLOGY

## BAIL

In England and the UK granting bail is common. However, bail may not be offered by some courts under some circumstances; for instance, if the accused is considered likely not to appear for trial regardless of bail.

In England and Wales there are three types of bail that can be given:

- \* Police bail where a suspect is released without being charged but must return to the police station at a given time.
- \* Police to court where having been charged a suspect is given bail but must attend his first court hearing at the date and Court given
- \* Court bail where having already been in court a suspect is granted bail pending further investigation or while the case continues

Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the police have power to release a person, who has not been charged, on bail. This is deemed to be a release on bail in accordance with sections 3, 3A, 5 and 5A of the Bail Act 1976.

### Why wouldn't I be allowed bail?

There are various reasons why the police may deny bail (see "remand"). These most commonly include:

- \* difficulty in ascertaining a real name or address.
- \* "reasonable" grounds for believing that the person arrested will fail to appear in court to answer to bail (absconding).
- \* stopping the individual from a repeat offence of the alleged crime.
- \* for the "protection" of the individual put

into custody.

- \* interfering with witnesses.
- \* for certain offences such as murder, treason (or in the case of recent riots in Bristol, for violent disorder or GBH).

Increasingly, if an individual is granted bail there may well be conditions attached, such as not to communicate with certain individuals, go to particular places etc. If another crime is believed to be committed whilst on bail, both are then reconsidered. The purpose of the \zine is to investigate the impacts of this type of restriction and legislation so more detail will be gone into in different sections.

### What happens if I am found "in breach of bail"?

If people "break bail" then they will either get a maximum 3 months custodial sentence (if the case is heard in a magistrates court) or if a decision is made in Crown court then it can be for a significantly longer time.

Failing to comply with bail conditions is not an offence, but may lead to the defendant being arrested and brought back to court, where they will be remanded into custody unless the court is satisfied that they will comply with their conditions in future.

## LICENCE

Some prisoners are released from prison 'on licence'. This means that although they are not serving their sentence in prison they are still required to adhere to certain conditions whilst serving the remaining part of their sentence in the

community. Time spent 'on licence' in the community is supervised by the Probation Service.

### **What are the conditions?**

There are six standard conditions for prisoners serving determinate sentences i.e. a custodial sentence with a fixed length. The prisoner should:

- \* Behave appropriately and not commit further offences or undertake any activity that may undermine their attempts to resettle in the community.
- \* Maintain contact with their supervising probation officer and do what is asked of them.
- \* Allow their supervising probation officer to visit them at home if they need to.
- \* Live at an address approved by their probation officer and keep them informed of any changes of address (even if only for one night).
- \* Only do work, paid or unpaid, that has been approved by their probation officer and keep them notified of any changes in employment.
- \* Not travel outside of the United Kingdom. (Travel outside of the United Kingdom will only be granted in certain circumstances and then only very rarely).

Prisoners serving an indeterminate sentence (Life/IPP) have an additional condition placed on their licence as standard where the licence was issued after 16 May 2005. This is as follows:

- \* They shall be well behaved and not do anything which could undermine the purposes of supervision on licence which are to protect the public, by ensuring that their safety would not be placed at risk, and to secure their successful reintegration into the community.

There are also several additional conditions that may be imposed upon the offender. These include:

- \* Contact requirement
- \* Prohibited contact requirement
- \* Prohibited activity requirement
- \* Residency requirement
- \* Prohibited residency requirement
- \* Curfew requirement
- \* Exclusion requirement
- \* Supervision requirement
- \* Programme requirement
- \* Non-association requirement
- \* Drug testing requirement.

### **How will the prisoner know what their licence conditions are?**

The prisoner will get a copy of their licence before they leave the prison. The licence will tell them of all the conditions they must meet and will inform them of when they should report to the probation office managing their licence.

### **What happens if the offender breaks the terms of their licence?**

If an offender breaks the terms and conditions of their licence then they may be recalled to prison immediately, or depending on the circumstances, the offender might get a warning the first or second time they break the conditions of their licence. If the offender breaches their licence for a third time they will be recalled to prison.

### **How long will they be on licence for?**

- \* Determinate sentenced prisoners, serving sentences of between 12 months and 4 years, where the offence was committed prior to 4 April 2005, will be on licence until the three quarters point of their sentence.

\* Determinate sentenced prisoners, serving sentences of 4 years or more, where the offence was committed prior to 4 April, 2005, will be on licence until the three quarters point of their sentence.

\* Determinate sentenced prisoners, serving sentences of 12 months or more, where the offence was committed after 4 April, 2005 will be on licence from release until the end of their sentence.

\* Life sentenced prisoners will be on licence for the rest of their life.

\* IPP sentenced prisoners will be on licence for a minimum of 10 consecutive years after which they can apply to the Parole Board (annually) for the licence to be terminated.

\* Young offenders, aged under 21, who are serving 12 months or less will be subject to licence for 3 months.

\* Young offenders, aged under 21, who are serving sentences of 12 months or more will be subject to the same time periods as adults.

The concept and practice of enforcing a “licence” are just one of the many ways in which the police and the state extend the logic of prison beyond the physical walls of the cell. It can be extremely invasive, and deny individuals access to basic support they need due to the most spurious of reasons.

## PROBATION

### What does it mean to be “on probation”?

When an individual is “released” from prison they are then given a period of time (usually about 1/3 to 1/2 of your custodial sentence) when they are “on licence” and have to answer to a Probation Officer.

### What does a “Probation Officer” do?

Probation officers enforce the restrictions imposed on an individual by the court. They will often do home visits, and ensure that any “voluntary” work commitments are completed.

### What restrictions are placed on individuals as part of a licence?

Individuals may be ordered to remain employed, abide to a curfew, live at a directed place, obey the orders of the probation officer, and stay in the jurisdiction. The probationer might be ordered as well to refrain from contact with other individuals connected with their case, or “known” criminals, particularly co-defendants.

Additionally, the restrictions can include a ban on possession or use of alcoholic beverages, even if alcohol was not involved in the original criminal charges. Offenders on probation might be fitted with an electronic tag (or monitor), which signals their whereabouts to officials.

Also, offenders have been ordered to submit to repeated alcohol/drug testing or to participate in alcohol/drug or psychological treatment, or to perform community service work.

## REMAND

### What does “being on remand” (remand-into-custody) mean?

Being on remand means you are in prison but haven’t been tried or convicted yet. If at trial you found guilty and given a prison sentence then the amount of time you’ve spent in jail on remand is deducted from that sentence. Those on remand

will be housed in a local prison and taken directly to Court on the day of their trial.

### **Why are some people put on remand?**

When a person is remanded in custody it means that they will be detained in a prison until a later date when a trial or sentencing hearing will take place. The majority of prisoners on remand have not been convicted of a criminal offence and are awaiting trial following a not guilty plea.

As with the list above under “bail”, there are a number of reasons why someone might be put on remand, as being denied bail, and being remanded-into-custody are essentially the same thing.

The Courts will either then decide that they want them to remain on remand awaiting sentence or be released on bail pending sentencing or trial up to the point when the case is heard and the defendant is convicted.

### **Can I visit people in court after the hearing?**

Unfortunately it is not possible once a hearing is complete, and an individual has been remanded into custody or sentenced, for relatives or partners to have contact with their loved one. In the time immediately after the hearing the individual who has been remanded or sentenced will be taken back to the cells in the court building and from there will be transferred to a local prison establishment. It is often the case at court that not even solicitors are allowed to visit the prisoner directly after a hearing.

## **ASBO**

### **What does “ASBO” stand for?**

An anti-social behaviour order or ASBO is a civil order made against a person who has been found to be engaging with what is deemed to be “anti-social behaviour”.

This is a vague -and often abused- term that is commonly used against sections of society who are discriminated against, and especially young people. The orders, introduced in the United Kingdom by Tony Blair in 1998, were designed to correct minor incidents that would not ordinarily warrant criminal prosecution. Because of this, so-called “Plastic Coppers” (PCSO’s “Community Support Police Officers”) can enforce them without going to court.

### **When do you get “ASBOed?”**

An Anti-Social Behaviour Order is an Order of the Court which tells an individual over 10 years old how they must NOT behave.

An ASBO may be issued in response to “conduct which caused or was likely to cause harm, harassment, alarm or distress, to one or more persons not of the same household as him or herself and where an ASBO is seen as necessary to protect relevant persons from further anti-social acts by the defendant.” This conduct ranges from fare evasion and racism to dogging and arson.

It is worth noting that actually ASBO’s are unsurprisingly often used by the state as a method of perpetuating racism -in terms of which groups are most likely to be given an ASBO- rather than tackling it.

### **What proof is required to uphold an**

## “ASBO”?

Applications for ASBOs are heard by magistrates sitting in their civil capacity. It is virtually indistinguishable from the criminal standard. The applicant must satisfy the court “so that it is sure” that the defendant has acted in an anti-social manner. The test for the court to be “satisfied so that it is sure” is the same direction that a judge gives to a jury in a criminal case heard in the Crown: ie “beyond reasonable doubt”.

The ASBO represents “a form of personalised criminal law”. It must be relevant to their particular anti-social behaviour. In theory, orders must not be drafted too widely or imprecisely. Though the reality is that ASBO’s are issued often indiscriminantly.

### **Who is at risk of getting an ASBO?**

A 2005 memorandum submitted by the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) asserted that “there is ample evidence of the issuing of ASBOs by the courts being inconsistent and almost a geographical lottery.

There is great concern that people are being jailed following the breach of an ASBO where the original offence was itself non-imprisonable. There is also evidence that ASBOs have been used where people have mental health problems where treatment would be more appropriate. In NAPO’s view the time is right for a fundamental review of the use and appropriateness of Anti-social Behaviour Orders by the Home Office.”

A survey of Youth Offending Teams by the British Institute for Brain Injured Children in 2005 showed that 38% of ASBOs went

to young people with significant mental disorders. Problems included clinical depression/suicidal tendencies, autism, psychosis, personality disorders, learning disabilities, and ADHD. By contrast, the same survey of ASBO teams gave only a 5% reported incidence of mental impairment. This massive difference suggests that most ASBO teams do not take into account mental health problems even though the Home Office safeguards for vulnerable people in the ASBO process require it.

According to government evaluations (e.g. Housing Research Summary No. 230; DfCLG) in the ‘ASB Intensive Family Support’ (Sin Bin) projects introduced to supplement ASBOs, 80% of the families targeted had serious mental/physical health and learning disability problems; One in five families had children affected with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, 60% of the families were recognised as victims of ASBO. Project managers described many families as ‘easily scapegoated’ in neighbour disputes.

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