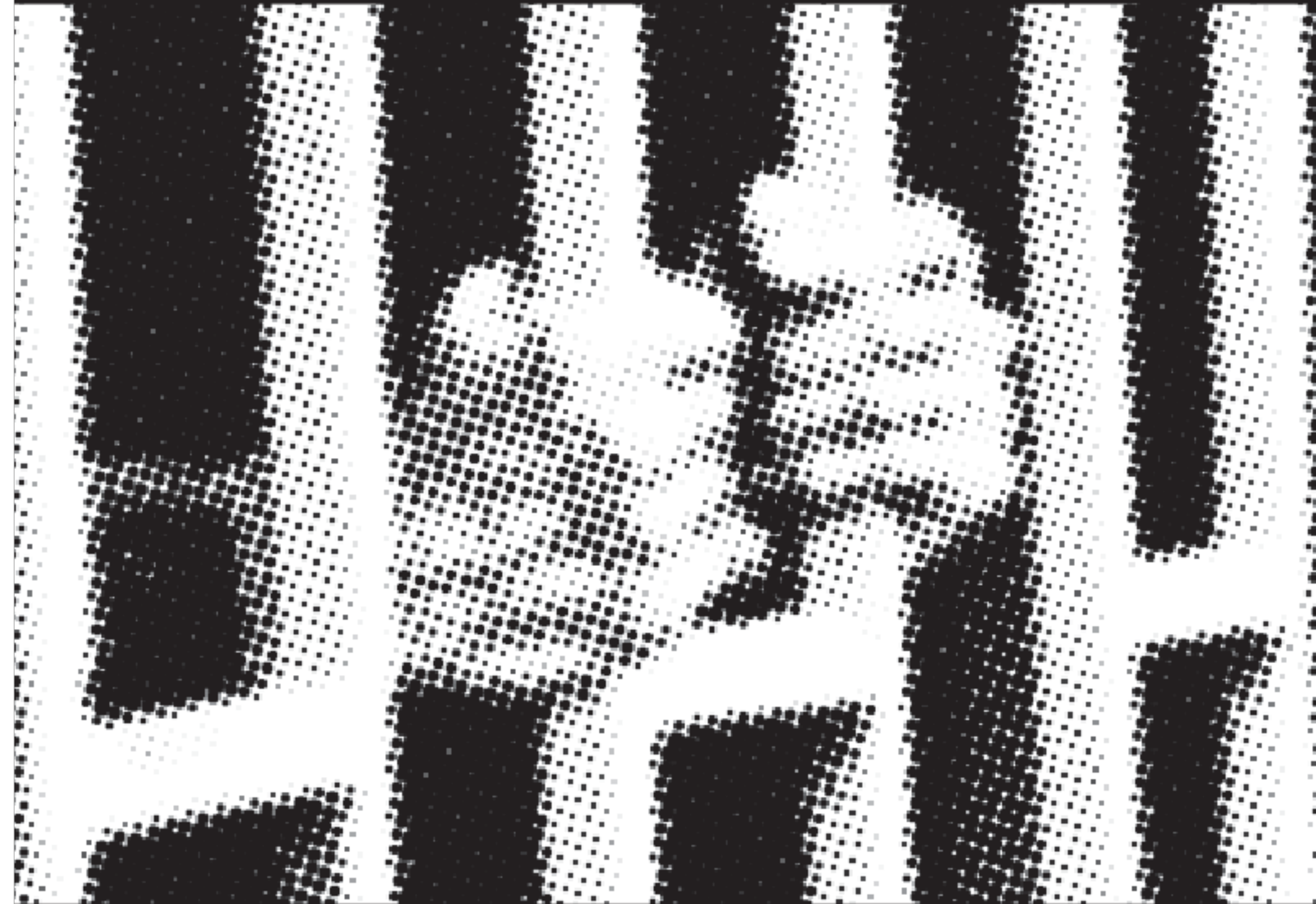


# **ANARCHIST** **BLACK CROSS**



**A Prisoner Support Guide**  
**2021 Edition**

# INTRODUCTION

*What is the ABC? & Who are Political Prisoners?*

Established prior to 1917 to defend Political Prisoners in czarist Russia, the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) became the banner under which many anarchists did prison support. Since then, the work of ABC has ebbed and flowed to the present day. In the mid-80s the first ABC collective formed in North America as the result of Black anarchist and then Political Prisoner Lorenzo Komboa Ervin's efforts. Anarchists in North America started collectives and, since its origins in the earlier part of the century, the ABC broadened to cover a wide variety of prison-related issues. In 1995, NJ ABC along with former New Afrikan anarchist POW, Ojore Lutalo, proposed the formation of an ABC Federation with the common goal of the support and defense of Political Prisoners (PP) and Prisoners of War (POW).

The first question to be asked before supporting PP/POWs should be what constitutes a PP or POW. The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF), along with many other groups and individuals from around the world, use the following definitions to determine who we support for a variety of historical, strategic and practical reasons:

**Political Prisoner:** A person incarcerated for actions carried out in support of legitimate struggles for self-determination\* or for opposing the illegal policies of the government and/or its political subdivisions. (Special International Tribunal on the Violation of Human Rights of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the United States Prisons and Jails, December, 1990)

**Prisoner of War:** Those combatants struggling against colonial and alien domination and racist regimes captured as prisoners are to be accorded the status of prisoner of war and their treatment should be in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. (August 12, 1949, General Assembly Resolution 3103 [XXVIII])

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\* **Self Determination:** the right by virtue of which all peoples are entitled freely to determine their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic cooperation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence. (Common Article 1(1) of the International Human Rights Covenants, 1966)

As is evident, these definitions were not our creation. We do object to the use of “illegal” in the PP definition and know full well that the United States and all capitalist and imperialist governments have now and will always murder, oppress and/or otherwise deny people the right to self-determination under the guise and protection of “law.” We also believe that the aforementioned written POW definition lacks recognition for those combatants struggling against institutionalized and “legal” economic and class oppression and we therefore extend our support to them. However, as accountable members within an international community of activists, we see it as responsible to respect these definitions that were collectively agreed upon at the 1990 Special International Tribunal on the Violation of Human Rights of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the United States Prisons and Jails. We also support the development of analysis and of these objections so as to best articulate them to this international community for acceptance in an appropriate, inclusive forum. Changing these collectively agreed upon definitions without any or adequate dialogue or debate between the activists and prisoners these definitions will effect is unaccountable and irresponsible. It would also deny us the opportunity to hear possible objections or possible improvements to our positions.

While many people in prison are victims of an unjust political system, not all prisoners are PPs or POWs. We believe it is a vital struggle for progressive and revolutionary people to build recognition that there are roughly 100 prisoners in this country who refused to become a victim of injustice and decided to organize and consciously fight back prior to their incarceration. The struggle is to build recognition that there is indeed a conflict in this country in which people are organizing and have organized themselves to resist, and that of those people, many are dead, and many are in prison, and that those prisoners are PPs or POWs. The ABCF, as a whole, historically refrained from formally supporting Earth Liberation (EL) and Animal Liberation (AL) prisoners, allowing each chapter to provide support if they so chose. However, in recent years, the Federation expanded its support for EL and AL prisoners whose action(s) included a larger social focus.

Being declared a PP or a POW is not an attempt to grant some great status to people who struggled politically to change or create a new society as some try to imply. As Sekou Odinga, a former New Afrikan POW (now released on parole) imprisoned for his political and military actions to build a revolutionary movement, stated: "Although I consider fighting for my people a good thing, being declared a POW doesn't entitle me to any luxury (or great status). You become an enemy of the state." The political reality of being an enemy of the state (such as a PP/POW) is much different than that of the victim of the state (such as a social prisoner). Indeed, as a class war POW Bill Dunne adds: "Being recognized as a PP or POW comes with greater liabilities than benefits and is done more out of responsibility and obligations to one's politics than for any desirability of the status."

Some social prisoners (those not imprisoned for political activity) decide to organize and consciously fight back against oppression within the prison system. We believe those prisoners who righteously struggle deserve support to the extent that outside organizations are capable of supporting them, yet these prisoners are not PP or POWs. Furthermore, the reason we believe PP/POWs should be prioritized by those people claiming to be revolutionaries can be summed up in the following quote by former Anarchist POW Ojore Lutalo: "Any movement that fails to support its political internees is a sham movement!" We feel that PP/POWs deserve priority support of the very political movements they came from, helped and continue to help build. We believe that for a movement to focus on support for social prisoners, while its own PP/POWs are left with insufficient or virtually no support, is unprincipled and politically wrong.

While many people in prison are victims of an unjust political system, not all prisoners are PPs or POWs. We believe it is a vital struggle for progressive and revolutionary people to build recognition that there are roughly 100 prisoners in this country who consciously struggled in social movement(s) against oppression prior to their incarceration. We aim to build recognition that there are inequalities in this country against which people have been and are organizing-- and that of those people, many are dead and many are in prison, and that those prisoners are PPs or POWs.

## Support the Warchest

The ABCF Warchest is a program sending monthly checks to PP/POWs who have been receiving insufficient, little, or no financial support during their imprisonment. PP/POWs requesting funds complete an application of financial questions. When the ABCF has collected sufficient funds to send out another monthly check, the applications are reviewed by a rotating body of PP/POWs called the Prisoner Committee, who make a judgment on which applicant is in the most financial need. There is also an emergency fund designed to immediately send checks to those PP/POWs in need of one-time or emergency assistance.

Founded in 1994, the Warchest has provided consistent and reliable financial aid, serving a much-neglected comradely function. Since its inception, the ABCF has raised over \$50,000 with just this one program. All funds raised go directly to the political prisoners, for which the program is designed. Despite our success, our comrades are still in dire need of funds. Endorse this program by giving a monthly or one-time donation to increase the number of prisoners being supported monthly. A financial report is published that documents all money received and the prisoners it was sent to.

Send cash, checks or money orders made to Tim Fasnacht to P.O. Box 8682, Lancaster PA, 17604, or email [timABCF@aol.com](mailto:timABCF@aol.com) for more information.

"Thanks much for the support you've been organizing. I really appreciate it. After not having any or very little support for so long, it now seems like people have all of a sudden realized that I am alive." - Sekou Odinga (former New Afrikan POW)

revolutionary movement. If you are an outside individual or group, and you feel like you agree and can offer this type of support to PP/POWs, we encourage you to contact us. If you would like to place a particular focus on supporting PP/POWs and would like to begin supporting them, come to a Philly ABC event or consider forming your own ABC and joining the ABCF. By doing so we will all benefit from the collective sharing of each other's ideas and experiences, and the expression of those experiences in each of our local collective's work. This local work can then fit into the entire ABCF's struggle to build a federation and new social movement to not only free PP/POWs, but to effect the changes needed to create a new society. We hope you find this information useful, and please feel free to contact us with your comments or suggestions to improve it:

### Philadelphia ABC

P.O. Box 8642, Philadelphia PA 19101, Philadelphia, PA 19143

[phillyabc@riseup.net](mailto:phillyabc@riseup.net)

To contact other ABCF chapters, see [abcf.net/chapters](http://abcf.net/chapters).

## PREPARING TO SUPPORT PP/POWs

It is necessary to have sufficient knowledge of the prisoners you will be supporting-- not only who they are, but specifically what they went to prison for, and how those actions were an extension of the political movements they are a part of. Or, if the prisoner was framed to remove them from their participation in outside struggle, what political work they did, and evidence to indicate they were framed. The PPs and POWs supported by the ABCF are all featured on [prisonersolidarity.com](http://prisonersolidarity.com).

If you contact or are contacted by a prisoner who you believe is a PP or POW, or claims to be one but is not yet designated by the ABCF as such, it is ABCF policy to request documentation from them. This documentation must indicate that the prisoner's incarceration meets the definitions listed in the first section. Documentation is essential before a support relationship can begin. It will enable supporters to be familiar with those they support, and to present their case(s) to others while trying to build further support. We need to be able to answer the questions, "Why do you support them?" or "Why should I?" It is also ABCF policy to never print the name of a prisoner as a PP/POW unless one of our chapters has received such documentation from the prisoner or another supporter. When requesting documentation, suggest the following four forms:

1. Newspaper articles on the prisoner's court case that reflect the political nature of the charges they were originally sent to prison on.
2. Government documents the prisoner or a supporter obtained through the Freedom of Information Act that reflect the political nature of the case they were sent to prison on.
3. Validation from an outside revolutionary organization that the prisoner was or is a part of, or who was aware of the prisoner's activity. This validation must reflect that the charges the prisoner was sent to prison on had explicit and conscious political ends, or that the prisoner participated in political and revolutionary activity, and was framed as a result of that activity. If they were framed, we must also receive some kind of indication of prosecutorial misconduct.
4. Referral from another PP/POW that can provide documentation of their own case. PP/POWs referring other prisoners must be aware and able to provide sufficient facts about the political actions and nature of the case of the referred prisoner.

These four are not the only acceptable forms of documentation; they are simply suggestions that can easily be provided by PP/POWs in most cases. In general, it is necessary that offered documentation must be something other than a prisoner's word; it must be some kind of impartial factual report. Subjectivity may arise in evaluating prisoners. Our collective judgment will be based on the prisoners overall personal/political history and accountability in actions, both on the streets and once in prison.

## **CONTACTING PP/POWs**

Contacting PP/POWs is often 'hit or miss.' Some prisoners answer all their correspondences regularly and are interested in beginning new correspondences and further direct support. Others may not answer even repeated requests to begin a dialogue and a support relationship for whatever reason. One thing is certain—if one does not write back, try another, because someone, somewhere needs and would like to receive and develop a principled support relationship. Some PP/POWs receive a lot of mail and cannot possibly answer it all.

First, it is important to maintain a consistent mailing address. A P.O. Box for instance can remain a stable contact point between you and PP/POWs even if you move or travel frequently. Philly ABC has a P.O. Box that anyone who regularly comes to our letter-writing nights can use as their return address. We hold these events monthly and all letter-writing supplies and snacks are provided. We also mail birthday cards to PPs and POWs with birthdays in the following month. See [phillyabc.org](http://phillyabc.org) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for event details.

Some people, when they write to prisoners, are afraid to talk about their lives and what they are up to, thinking this may depress prisoners, especially those with long sentences, or that they are not interested in your life. However, any news, whether it's about people they know or not, is generally welcome. Especially if you didn't know them before they went to prison, they typically want to know about you, what your life is like, etc. For people imprisoned from our movements and struggles it's vital to keep them involved in the ongoing resistance—telling them about actions, sending them magazines if they want them, discussing ideas and strategies with them. Some people will just want to keep their head down and not engage in politics until they get out. Feel free to ask if there are any particular subject(s) they'd like to talk about.

## **SUPPORT IS A TWO-WAY STREET**

This piece could not be finished (and maybe it isn't anyway) without stressing the fact that any principled support relationship is a two-way street. PP/POWs deserve the support their activities on the street and continued political activism once behind bars has earned them. Supporters deserve the same type of support that any principled support work they do has earned them. PP/POW supporters should feel free to ask the prisoners they support to help them in projects or events they are organizing. Statements from PP/POWs in support of the event or project, requesting the prisoner solicit further support from any of their other supporters that you have no contact with etc. are things the prisoner can do to help you. Your support relationship may also develop into a friendship in which you will not only be able to discuss politics and learn politically from each other, but also provide each other with a degree of personal support.

Obviously, there are many more things than are printed here that you can do to help the prisoner and the prisoner may be able to do to help you. As your relationship develops, the subjective conditions that exist between you will better be able to determine exactly what form the support will take. But be careful-- we often hear that the only time "supporters" contact PP/POWs is when they want some kind of statement from them. This type of "support" is not a two-way street. By the same token, it has not been unheard of for PP/POWs to "use" their supporters who too willingly offer "no-strings attached" support.

Support should not be unconditional, but the conditions that your support work proceeds under should be based on principles that usually transcend the various political ideologies that exist between the prisoners and their supporters. Should mutual respect, honesty and a solid straightforwardness be attained between you and the prisoner, you should find that a principled, two-way support relationship will develop.

This is a simple guide to suggest practical and principled ways to support Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. The need for this work is great, and the importance of developing a new revolutionary strategy while tapping into the living history PP/POWs represent cannot be overlooked. Supporting PP/POWs not only fulfills a sorely neglected responsibility of our movements, but if done in the principled manner most prisoners will rightfully insist upon, it also teaches us the reliability, discipline and accountability necessary in our own characters to build a new

Members of Philly ABC can help coordinate visits with State prisoners in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

## **HEALTH AND LEGAL ISSUES**

Medical care in prison is typically (and strategically) substandard. If a prisoner you are supporting is having difficulty accessing a proper diet, medical attention, or medications a call or fax campaign to the prison may be necessary as they typically manage the medical services. Prisoners can also fill out a form to grant someone on the outside access to their medical records. That way, a second opinion from a physician or health care practitioner can be solicited. Occasionally someone will be punished for the support they are receiving. Especially in cases like this, it is a good idea for support people to maintain good relationships with lawyer(s) or whichever lawyer is working on the prisoner's case. They can help file motions to prevent retaliatory transfers, segregation and other punishments.

## **POST-RELEASE SUPPORT**

It is also important to recognize that support should not end the day someone is released. Especially if convicted of a felony, people may have issues securing housing and/or employment. There may also be additional needs around accessing affordable healthcare that they were denied access to while in prison. It is a good idea to plan to give people a supply of funds upon their release to help them transition. This amount could be a few thousand dollars or roughly a few hundred for every year they were in prison.

Date all your correspondences, and include a return address on the envelope as well as your letter because the envelope is sometimes discarded before the prisoner receives it. Also, some prisons don't allow letters without a return address. All letters are opened and looked through, and some letters get copied, delayed or stopped. Don't write stuff that could endanger anyone, or any information would cause significant repercussion if it were passed to authorities. Numbering the pages may ensure that all of the pages make it to the prisoner (or at least they will know if one is missing).

## **MATERIAL OR MONETARY SUPPORT**

Most prisoners can receive photocopied or printed articles as well as photographs (not Polaroids). Sometimes the prison has a page limit, so check the mail regulations before sending a lengthy article. The only prisons that, to our knowledge, currently accept stamps with letters are private prisons run by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). Always include a list of enclosures when sending articles or stamps with the letter. Different prisons always have different restrictions on what can be sent in. If you send something and do not list it in the letter, it may never be seen again. If for some reason it is "unauthorized material," having it listed in your letter will offer a better chance of having it returned to you and/or giving the prisoner the opportunity to challenge its denial of acceptance.

In your correspondence, you can ask if they could use stamps or funds to buy stamps and how best to get it to them. Most State prisons will allow you to send only postal money orders (available at any U.S. post office), or in some cases have online payment options; check the website for that particular state's prison system or ask the prisoner for more information.

The Federal prison system (prisoners have an 8-digit ID# with a dash between the 5th and 6th digits) allows money orders to be sent to a central processing facility as well as online deposits using Western Union and Moneygram:

1. **U.S. Postal Money Order:** Do not send any correspondence with the money order, and checks and cash are not accepted. Make the money order out to the prisoner's name and ID# and send to the processing facility at:

Federal Bureau of Prisons

[Prisoner Recipient's Name, ID#]

P.O. BOX 474701

DES MOINES, IOWA 50947

The Bureau of Prisons will return funds that do not have valid prisoner information to the sender provided the envelope has an adequate return address. Put your name on the "FROM" space so you can cash it in case the money order is returned to you for some reason.

2. **Western Union:** via in-person location, over the phone (dial 1-800-634-3422 and choose option 2), or online at [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com) and select "Quick Collect." A credit/debit card will be required. While there is a fee to this service, funds will post no later than the next morning to the prisoner's account.
3. **Money Gram:** via in-person location or go to [www.moneygram.com/paybills](http://www.moneygram.com/paybills). Enter the Receive Code for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (7932) and the amount you are sending (up to \$300). For the recipient's account name, use the prisoner's ID# and their last name with no space in between. First-time users will have to set up an account and a MasterCard or Visa credit card is required. While there is a fee to this service, funds will post no later than the next morning to the prisoner's account.

Most prisons allow magazine subscriptions, as well as books sent directly from distributors or publishers. For example, you can order books from online sources and have them shipped directly to the prisoner. Some radical publishers, such as 4 Struggle Mag, the Earth First! Journal and PM Press, will offer free or discounted items to prisoners.

Some State prisons allow food or clothing packages to be sent or brought in. If you can afford to and are able to bring a package with you on a visit or send one in the mail, check with the prisoner for restrictions on what they can receive, and what they would prefer for you to get. Because prisons

maximum number of visitors allowed per visit if you plan on bringing other supporters, about getting photos of your visit, and anything else you can think of. Dress code rules often change and the prisoners may not be aware of them so the best practice is to bring several changes of clothes in your car so that you can change out of an article of clothing if they will not let you in wearing it. If you are traveling a long distance, you can call the prison the day before to make sure they are not on 'lockdown,' which would cancel visitation.

Some prisons allow photos to be taken at either the prisoner or the visitor's expense, and/or food to be purchased at the visitor's expense. Bring cash so you can get tickets, tokens or a vending card/whatever that prison uses. You will not be allowed to bring in pen, paper or anything in your pockets.

Upon entering, and often after leaving a visit with a PP/POW, supporters often feel a sense of depression or some kind of sorrow for the prisoner. Visits often clearly illustrate to us that these prisoners are not abstractions, or pieces of history that we read about in books, but living beings surviving in the indeed virtual hell of the United States prison system. However, these feelings often come from subjectiveness and it is important to keep the objective in mind. As former Puerto Rican POW Carmen Valentín reminds us, "Though our imprisonment is surely a form of torture, and at times very depressing for anyone to fathom, it is vital for fellow revolutionaries on the streets to be mindful that enduring our imprisonment is our responsibility as revolutionaries at this time. Our supporters' responsibility is to build a movement strong enough to offer principled support, and eventually free us. Any sad or depressing feelings of leaving us here after a visit should be transformed into this reality."

Several PP/POWs have also expressed the feeling of some visitors being like visitors at the zoo coming to see the PP/POW in their cage. This is likely to occur when supporters jump to visits without putting much energy into building a support relationship and indeed a friendship. Often this is due to a visitor's romantic ideals about PP/POWs, which can be corrected in most cases by putting energy into building a relationship first. Avoid altercations with other visitors, guards and prisoners. This could have an adverse impact on the person you are visiting; you may be asked to leave, or you may be banned from visiting again.



to visit any prisoner. In any case, each prisoner can tell you specifics such as the days and times allowed at the prison they are held in.

Because prisons often have restrictions on how many visits prisoners may receive per month, avoid surprising prisoners with visits as it may conflict with visits they are already expecting. Also, if arranging visits by mail, try to be specific about the day you will visit. By being vague and saying you'll visit "sometime that week," you may tie up the prisoners whole week if someone else wants to visit them the same week. If two people visit on the same day, one of you will have to be turned away at the front desk. Prisons so rarely bend any rules, especially for PP/POWs, that we might as well say they never do. Prisoners who receive very few visits may tell you to visit anytime. But until they give you the freedom to do so, be principled and considerate.

To visit Federal prisoners, you must first be approved by filling out a form that the prisoner must send you in advance, or you can download at [https://www.bop.gov/policy/forms/BP\\_A0629.pdf](https://www.bop.gov/policy/forms/BP_A0629.pdf) and fill out with the prisoner's permission and using the name of their counselor. Only people who say they had a relationship to a federal prisoner prior to their imprisonment are likely to be approved. They will ask you to describe the relationship you had and where it began. Usually, the prison will not approve people who say they visit other prisoners. Once you complete and mail the form to the prisoner's counselor (the address will be provided on the visiting form sent to you by the prisoner or you can get it from them and add it to your downloaded form), the prisoner will tell you after about a month if you have been approved or denied. When you arrive at the prison, the name and address on your ID must match what has been approved. See the BOP website or call the facility for dress code restrictions which vary by facility.

State prisons usually do not require you to be placed on an approved visitor's list; as far as we know, Pennsylvania is the only exception. You will go through a metal detector at any prison you visit, and need to show ID. Many state prisons require you to be pat searched and or swabbed for drug residue. State prisons also often have much stricter dress codes.

Confirm visiting days, work out all the details and ask all questions with the prisoner through the mail (or by phone if they call you). Plan visits ahead of time and allow enough time to reschedule a visit if your schedules conflict. Try to propose visiting days at least two or three weeks ahead of time if you are scheduling it through the mail. Ask about

usually have restrictions on the amount of clothes or pounds of food a prisoner can receive per month, and at a time, never surprise a prisoner with a package, as it may conflict with packages they are expecting from someone else. Again, the prisoner may not receive frequent packages and may tell you to bring them anytime you can, but until they give you the freedom to do so, be principled, be considerate of them and their conditions.

Instead of simply volunteering your support, or asking them a broad question like "what kind of support do you need," try to suggest some things you think you can do to help. PP/POWs, for the most part, need all kinds of support. List resources you have available, contacts you can offer, or talents you possess that could be useful. This will help the both of you to more easily and quickly discover the best kind of support you can offer, and that they also want.

The ABCF tries to have all support given to PP/POWs be reliable, consistent and stable; something you might keep in mind before offering a type of support and then not being able to provide it after a short while. This is not to say PP/POWs could not use short term or one-time support of one kind or another. Whatever the case may be, it is very important to be honest and upfront about what you can, and are prepared to, do. If you can only offer some kind of support on a limited or inconsistent basis, tell them. If it is a type of support they can depend on regularly, tell them. At all stages of support, try to keep the following quote by anti-imperialist PP David Gilbert in mind: "Because the need seems so great, some supporters feel compelled to promise way more than they can do-- which only drives us crazy. Much better to be limited, be focused, be real, be consistent." You can tell them honestly if you anticipate that you will have the time to write regularly. With mail delays, writing 'consistently' to a prisoner could entail about 1-2 letters per month.

## **BEGINNING TO SUPPORT PP/POWs**

Once correspondence is established, and you have sufficient knowledge and documentation of the prisoner, principled support should be safe to commence. One of the most difficult realities of being in prison is having to become dependent on others for almost every aspect of their continued political and personal life (especially when you consider the reason for them in prison is for struggling for independence). No matter what type of support you offer-- from copying documents, to sending books or magazines, to completing a job for them-- it is important to keep on top of what you have committed to do and complete it in a reasonable and timely manner.

Some popular ways ABCF groups support PP/POWs is by organizing benefits, printing and selling merchandise, printing and distributing flyers and leaflets. This raises visibility and awareness about the prisoners, who they are, the movements they came from, and often explains the very reasons why we do support work. When fundraising is involved, ABCF groups also use these funds to either financially support PP/POWs or to support the work we are engaged in.

However, it is necessary for supporters to contact the PP/POWs who this support work focuses on. It is irresponsible and unaccountable for groups to start work on behalf of specific PP/POWs without their knowledge. It is ABCF policy to first receive sanction from the prisoners who will be featured in these activities. We cannot proceed until we receive such sanction, and if they do not offer it, we cannot proceed against their wishes.

If prisoners agree, it is also ABCF policy to describe our plans in detail and ask for input and suggestions. Making sure PP/POWs are a part of their own support is crucial. Sometimes prisoners will give you the freedom to proceed without much of their input. But even still, it is ABCF policy to keep them updated on our progress and make them aware of all final decisions before we begin. Again, if funds are involved, details of what will be done with the funds raised must also be discussed before they are collected. Some prisoners will allow you to use all funds raised in your support work without sending them any portion. But they must be given the right to offer the money that will be raised in their name, for their commitments and their sacrifices. When producing merchandise to be sold, it is customary for the ABCF to offer a '60% to the prisoner 40% to the support group' split of the proceeds (funds raised after the cost). For

example, the proceeds of a pamphlet that costs .25¢ to make sells for \$2, is \$1.75. A 60%:40% split of \$1.75 would be \$1.05 (60%) to the prisoner, and .70\$ (40%) to the supporters.

## **PHONE AND EMAIL CONTACT**

After you get to know each other, you may consider asking the prisoner to call or email with you. Just as the mailing address, and everything else involved in support work, consistency is always a great advantage. Offer a reliable phone number and suggest convenient times for them to call. Often phone calls are limited to 15 minutes and the prisoner has to pay for them by the minute. They typically have a limited number of minutes per month as well. Prisoners are usually limited in the number of contacts they can add to their phone or email list, so do not be offended if they do not have space on their list at the time you ask. Some control unit prisons offer extremely limited phone time, and this may prevent this form of connection from occurring. If the case is that the prisoner cannot afford the "luxury" of making calls, you can send them the prisoner some financial support they can use to put on their phone account.

Connecting with the prisoner(s) you support by phone or email can greatly reduce the time it takes to get things done, and details of support work can often be discussed more easily this way making it at times preferable for both parties. Having that direct line of communication is more expedient than a dialogue through postal mail, however due to the cost of email and phone a prisoner may still prefer to conduct most of their communication in postal mail.

## **VISITING PP/POWs**

If geographically possible, you may also consider visiting PP/POWs. Some prisoners enjoy visits more than others; some prisoners receive frequent visits, while others receive few or none. After you have established a relationship with a prisoner and you decide to request a visit, here are some things that could be helpful.

Restrictions and criteria for visiting Federal and State prisons are different. Generally, it is easier to visit state prisoners, while visiting conditions are usually better at Federal prisons. Listed below are some of the different guidelines for visiting Federal/State prisoners, and some guidelines useful