

Article 1 Nationwide Prison Strike

September 9th, 2016 marked the beginning of the largest prison strike in United States history. It began in a few prisons in Alabama and Texas but has since spread to more than 40 American prisons. Despite the magnitude of the strike, the mainstream media that seems only interested in Trump and Clinton's trading of barbs has mostly ignored it, with the inmate's efforts only reaching small publications. Their efforts must be acknowledged, so that their strike may be taken seriously.

The prisoners used smuggled cellphones and social media to communicate amongst each other. Communing for months led to their decision to start the strike on the 45th anniversary of the Attica prison uprising. Their horrible living and working conditions reinforced their determination. It is well known that prisoners live in fear of sexual and physical assault from fellow inmates and even prison guards. But, also, they are often used as cheap or free labor for the private companies that own prisons and contract their manufacturing to state prisons. Companies like Wal-Mart, TCI Manufacturing and many use inmates for that labor. It's very lucrative for both the prisons and companies, but not the prisoners.

According to The Root, approximately 38 percent of America's prisoners work for little or no pay. Some opt out for incentive programs, such as good time release. With that, an inmate is offered a few days off his sentence as a credit for every shift he works. That appears beneficial but after racking up a large percentage of credits, a problem reveals itself to inmates. The problem is that some parole boards don't honor the credits because they are not required to, which is not explained to most prisoners.

In Texas, a prisoner by the name of Comrade Keith 'Malik' Washington, Comrade Malik for short, is one of the leaders of the Texas strike and has recently been thrown in solitary confinement. He has an explanation on his website, comrademalik.com, for why these credits are not being honored. He writes, "Comrades we have been lied to and tricked. The oppressors who sit on the Texas Board of Criminal Justice have attached a numeric monetary value to prisoners, and so has the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, there is no way they will ever honor these bullshit credits and release us."

He, vehemently, implies the prison system stands to make more money off a prisoner that chooses to work than a prisoner that is forced. Sound familiar yet?

For some people, it sounds like prison slavery. Most of those people work in groups like the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), a pseudo-union for the incarcerated workers. They fight for the inmates to be recognized as legitimate employees and helped to organize the strike. Azzurra Crispino, Media Co-chair of the IWOC, spoke with me about what the prisoners hope to accomplish. On that list, is the end of prison slavery, minimum wage for prisoners, an end to long-term solitary

confinement, appropriate health care and for Good Time release to be honored. She went on to further explain their end goal. "We're not just trying to make things better for prisoners. We don't just want bigger cages and longer leashes, we want an end to prisons, period." That may sound like an impossible task but when you compare how prisons are sold to us to the reality of them, one can see how they are obsolete.

When I was child, I was told that prison is a place of rehabilitation, and that criminals are put there so they can learn to become contributing members of society. I'm sure most people are taught to believe in the prison system and the wonders it does. As a child, I imagined how they worked; cartoonish images of prison would often run through my mind. My mind was filled with images of murderers and thieves going in the front door and coming out of the back as honest, hard-working citizens, as if they were on an assembly line. But my naiveté was quickly destroyed by my research of the reality of prison life. Rehabilitation is not what prison is for. It has proven to be a place where humanity is erased and a number is written in.

As an African American and Latino male, the truths of prison were quickly explained to me. You see, I grew up in a poor neighborhood. Everyday, I saw African American and Latino men and women thrown in to the back of police cars for all manner of things. Drug possession, gun charges, and robbery may sound like they are worthy of hard time but most of these crimes are done out of necessity or youthful ignorance. A crime committed by a sixteen year old boy, can hold him captive in the same system for 40 years. That's what most inmates who are involved in the strike are. They are people who made wrong decisions when they thought it was their only option. They are those whose backs were against the wall because of the system and society they live in. They are the ones whose voices are being stifled by corporations that benefit off their free labor.

The companies that run these prisons would like for us to forget the most important aspect of this strike: Prisoners are People.

Article 2

Forget G-Easy Let's Get Out of Here!: Jordan Peele Get Out Movie Review.

Being a black person with white friends or a white partner is always tricky. One of the hardest parts is interacting with their white family members or friends. For instance, your white friends who live in the suburbs will often invite you to their homes. There you will, inevitably, meet their parents and friends. Now, I know from personal experience, that can be one of the most anxiety inducing experiences a person of color can have.

Imagine it...You are standing in a backyard that leads directly into the woods while one of their friends asks you if you've ever heard of the artist G Easy. Another friend tries to convince you that white rap Jesus (on the right hand of his father Eminem) Macklemore's *The Heist* is the best rap album of the past five years. I mean, the song *Thrift Shop* was just so fun and relatable, right? In another instance, a friend tells you about an urban legend of sacrifices in the woods around a fire pit that they keep adding wood and lighter fuel to while gleefully laughing. While this is happening there is a constant flow of illegal fireworks being lit and thrown around with reckless abandon. Throughout all this, there are two things you may be thinking: 1. Who is G Eazy? and 2. That fire is way too big to be just for warmth, is it for me? You laugh off that thought of paranoia, but in it never really leaves your mind.

Jordan Peele's *Get Out* takes that thought and makes it a reality, with great results. Described as a horror comedy, it stand ups on it's own as a new original horror film cementing its place in this post-modern horror era. With the use of racism as it's monster, it becomes a horror film that reaches past it's horror conventions. As the story unfolds the audience is put in the shoes of a black man that is trying to fit in with his girlfriend's white family.

The premise is where the theme of racism is explored. When Chris, a black man, decides to visit his white girlfriend's parents, he immediately feels out of place. His girlfriend's parents are awkward around him, making statements about how they would've voted for President Obama for a third term. The presence of their black gardener and housekeeper also make him uncomfortable due their hostile forced smiles that were reminiscent of minstrel actors. But the horrors really start to reveal themselves when his girlfriend's mom hypnotizes him to make him stop smoking. From there, the film is a thrill ride that also makes you think about how racism can also exist past the polite exterior of some white people.

Jordan Peele becomes a real auteur that's not afraid to take risks in this film by both calling out his white audience and providing insight into the minds of black people living in America. Throughout the film, Peele is calling attention to subconscious racism, while using conscious racism as the monster. Before it's all revealed to Chris, the his girlfriend's family seems to be trying to be polite to him to show him they are not racist.

However, in doing so, they are being inherently racist, in the form of a microaggression, which to the naked eye seems harmless yet is incredibly insensitive and stings in a subtle way. For example, when his girlfriend's family has a party, he is introduced to many of the partygoers. During this montage, one older white man tries to relate to him with golf by saying that he knows Tiger Woods.

On one hand it seems like the man is just trying to relate to him but it's really another microaggression. He is trying to relate to his blackness through a famous black person. This implies that he only sees him for his race and not as a human being. In these moments, the movie becomes an examination of white progressives and the constant microaggressions that they commit. This is where the film shines bright.

Peele has made a film that speaks to black people who have been scared around white people, which is most of us if not all of us. It is a post-modern horror masterpiece and ingenious examination of racism.

Article 3 Taking a Stand at Standing Rock

Today, United States Veterans have descended upon the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation to supply relief to the tribes and people who have banded together to protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. These protesters prefer to be referred to as Water Protectors or the #NoDAPL movement. Along with the Veterans for Standing Rock, these water protectors are looking to provide protection from the National Guard and local North Dakota law enforcement, who are being tasked by the government with evicting the protesters from the Oceti Sakowin Camp north of the Cannonball River by the 5th of Dec.

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe has been protesting the pipeline since April of this year. They have been gaining support from indigenous people all over the country and the world. If built, the pipeline would run from the North Dakota Bakken region through South Dakota and Iowa into Illinois, crossing through the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, which contains many sacred sites. The pipeline would also run underneath the Missouri River causing much concern amongst the residents of Standing Rock, due to the river being their biggest source of clean water. Any possible leak would pollute that water source and, subsequently, the entire river. Kelcy Warren is the CEO of Energy Transfer Partners, the builders of the DAPL; he has said that while the pipeline is safe, "human error" can lead to leaks.

During the original planning, the pipeline was routed through the city of Bismarck whom's population is 90% white. But due to complaints of possible leakage and water pollution, Energy Transfer Partners rerouted the pipeline through the Standing Rock Reservation, leading to the start of the protests.

On the evening of Nov. 20th, more than 100 Water Protectors and allies decided to head to a nearby bridge with a semi-truck to remove two burnt vehicles that were serving as a barricade put up by the Morton County Sherriff's Department and state of North Dakota. According to the Indigenous Environmental Network, the militarized police began setting off tear gas. In below freezing temperatures, 26 degrees to be exact, the police then doused the protesters with water using fire hoses. LaDonna Allard, Director of the Sacred Stone Camp, says, "All I can say is why? We are asking for clean water,

we are asking for the right to live, we are asking for our children to live. Instead they attack us, because they protect oil.”

Much of this confrontation was broadcasted live on social media, with many onlookers comparing it to the 1963 civil rights demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. That protest also turned violent when Birmingham police sprayed black protesters with high pressure hoses, while simultaneously siccing police dogs on them.

Over the course of the night, more than 160 protesters were injured but one was left in critical condition. Sophia Wilansky, a 21 year old protester from New York, was injured by a concussion grenade used by the police. According to a statement released by Wilansky’s father, Wayne, she was injured when the grenade exploded right when it hit her arm. Mr. Wilansky went on to describe her injury in gruesome detail: “Both her radial and ulnar artery were completely destroyed. Her radius was shattered and a large piece of it is missing. Her medial nerve is missing a large section as well. All of the muscle and soft tissue between her elbow and wrist were blown away.” He also went on to claim that the police did this on purpose, with hope that they would cause the most amount of damage to these protestors.

Mr. Wilansky gets very candid with his emotions towards the end of the statement. He writes, “She will be, every day for the foreseeable future, fearful of losing her arm and hand. There are no words to describe the pain of watching my daughter cry and say she was sorry for the pain she caused me and my wife. I died a thousand deaths today and will continue to do so for quite some time. I am left without the right words to describe the anguish of watching her look at her now alien arm and hand.”

On November 25th, four days after the confrontation, the Army Corps of Engineers issued a letter to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe explaining how they intend to shut down access to lands containing the Oceti Sakowin Camp and set up a free speech zone where they can “protest peacefully.” The letter was signed by District Commander Colonel John W. Henderson. In it he writes, “This decision is necessary to protect the general public from the violent confrontations between protesters and law enforcement officials that have occurred in this area. And to prevent death, illness, or serious injury to inhabitants of encampments due to the harsh North Dakota winter conditions.”

On the 29th, the chairman of the tribe reiterated their stance on the matter and assured the country that the, now, 7,000 protesters would not be leaving. Two days after, the group Veterans for Standing Rock declared their support of the Water Protectors and traveled to the reservation.

On the same day, President-elect Donald Trump, who has stock in Energy Transfer Partners, has thrown his support behind the construction of the DAPL. According to Trump’s spokesman Bryan Lanza, his backing of the pipeline “has nothing

to do with his personal investments and everything to do with promoting policies that benefit all Americans.”

Donald Bell, an English student at the university, had this to say about these new developments; “the idea of a designated ‘free speech zone’ is exactly the type of Orwellian nightmare that the American people have been dreading since November 8th, and it’s only fitting that Trump gave it a thumbs up. Conversely, the US Veterans offering support for native tribes is the first evidence we have of a united front against the corporate abundance of the incoming administration.”