

THE FIRE INSIDE

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Download the first issue here: <https://rashidmod.com/?p=3884>

Defying the Tomb

Selected Prison Writings and Art of Kevin "Rashid" Johnson
Featuring Exchanges with an Outlaw



Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, and fulfill it or betray it.
— Frantz Fanon

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, Minister of Defense,
New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter

Foreword by Russell "Maroon" Shoats ◇ Afterword by Sundiata Acoli
Introduction and Afterword by Tom Big Warrior

UPROAR FUNDRAISER!

Rashid got word that his publisher had several boxes of copies of this book, and he suggested we sell them to raise funds for UPROAR. Purchasing the book from our site helps us raise funds to strengthen the union of prisoners' loved ones and to carry out our work of tracking, documenting, and exposing prison abuse to build power to end it.

\$10 + shipping (\$16.95 total)

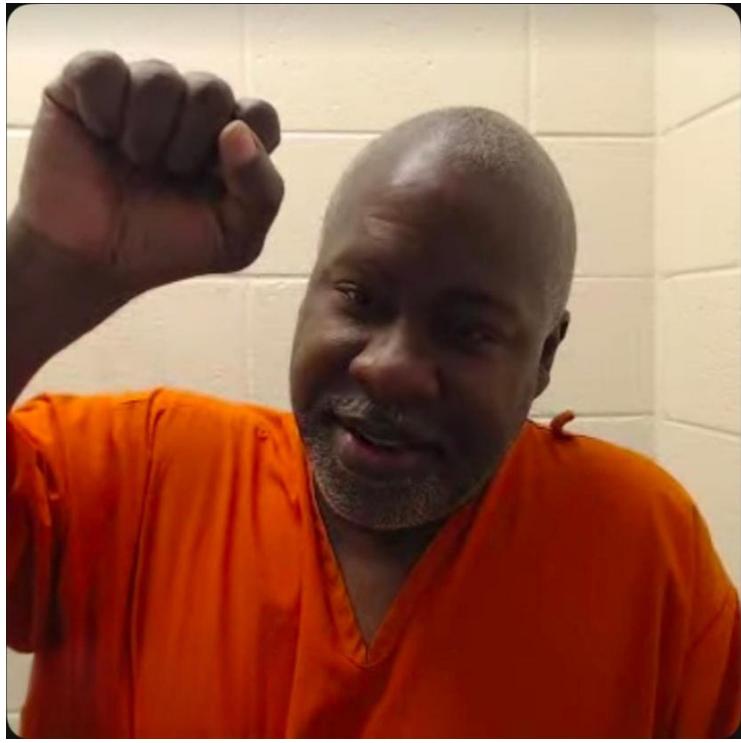
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EDITORIAL

by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson (2025)



"People who come out of prison can build up the country.
"Misfortune is a test of people's fidelity
"Those who protest at injustice are people of true merit.
"When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out"

— Ho Chi Minh, written while in prison

Things took an important turn for Virginia prisoners last winter. The story broke in Oct 2024 that numerous adults in custody at Va's notorious Red Onion State Prison had set themselves on fire in desperate efforts to be transferred away from the inhumane conditions of the prison. The story gained international media attention and prompted Va legislators to visit the prison, publicly criticize conditions there, and call for immediate change.

VADOC director Chadwick Dotson went in the media claiming the report was "ludicrous" and a fabrication by this writer and prison abolitionists aiming to discredit the system. This writer went on to refute Dotson, as legislators and the media contradicted his denials and even produced internal Red Onion emails, obtained by Freedom of Information Act requests, where Red Onion administrators were discussing the prisoner burnings at the time they were happening and how to stop them.

A call was put out in Dec '24 to create a prisoner support organization, composed not of career advocates and those in pawn to officials, but instead of people who genuinely care about the treatment of the imprisoned, namely prisoners' loved ones and ex-prisoners.

From this, **UPROAR (Uniting Prisoners' Relatives Organizing Against Repression)** was born. The group hit the ground like paratroopers and immediately went to work organizing to expose and challenge abuses in the prisons.

We began with a winter rally in Jan '25, on the opening day of the General Assembly, where demands were put forward to fire Director

Dotson and his assistant Arnold David Robinson, to create an independent prisoner oversight committee with enforcement powers, and that retaliation against vocal witnesses to abuses stop. Despite a citywide water crisis and icy conditions, the rally was well-attended, as was the public meeting afterward at the Wesley church.

Initially, several Va-based prisoner advocacy groups denounced UPROAR's aims and demands as too extreme, opting instead to collaborate with the same officials who were abusing prisoners, overseeing these abuses, and covering them up. Yet, when this writer surveyed dozens of prisoners asking if they supported UPROAR's demands or those of advocates who endorsed allowing the VADOC to investigate and "correct" itself, the response was nearly unanimous — shut Red Onion and Wallens Ridge down and fire the heads of the VADOC.

From there, more rallies followed (on May 24th and Oct 24th — the latter at VADOC headquarters), which gained more support and steam for our movement, and its membership and demands.

UPROAR took up protest against and support of victims in numerous cases of abuse in the VADOC. Many of these prisoners' loved ones turned to us and joined us, becoming part of a vocal organization, whereas most were previously afraid to speak up or, attempting to raise their voices alone, ran into brick walls and false leads erected by officials.

We called out the newly seated ombudsman, Andrea Sapone, at several public meetings held by her office, where her role was exposed as in no way serving the interests of abused prisoners, nor did she investigate or address the abuses at the remote prisons her office promised to give priority attention to. UPROAR was validated in our founding views that officials could not be trusted to investigate and correct their own abuses.

We were joined in a coalition of nearly a dozen prisoner support groups to meet with the campaign of Va governor-elect Abigail Spanberger on Oct 31 as part of a push for prison and parole reform in Va. The meeting was punctuated by the testimony of the mother and aunt of Aubrey McKay, a prisoner whose death at Wallens Ridge has been covered up and misrepresented by VADOC as a natural death, whereas autopsies found him to have suffered blunt force trauma, cuff injuries to his ankles and wrists, a crushed throat, blackened eyes, and so on. UPROAR has been protesting and publicizing Aubrey's case from our inception.

As our numbers grow, we are developing greater tactical agility and organizational capacity, and stand to become a force of genuine change for the imprisoned. This first issue of our newsletter contains a sampling of articles published by and about our work and development during this first year, along with some relevant writings.

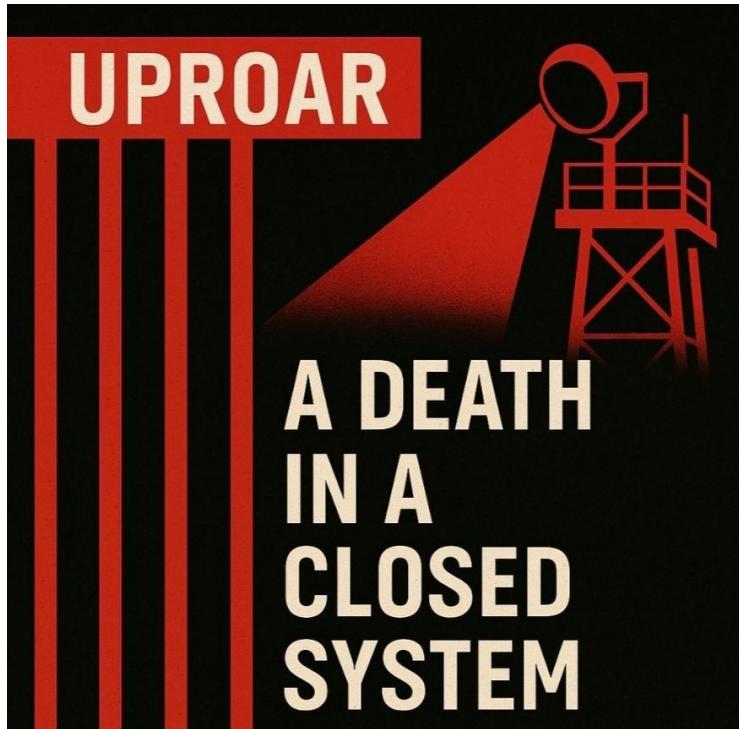
**Join us! Support us! So we can support you!
Only if we Dare to Struggle do we Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!**

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

US

by Frank E. Reid, 2025

Even on the Other side my comrades are on my side.
Down for the ride. We on the right side of history. We don't have to hide.
Inspired by an organizational spirit of solidarity .
This is Unity Not charity.
Power to the vision of our collective clarity.
When we struggle. we don't just bubble. We produce
revolutionary trouble to REACTION
I can hear John Lewis laughing.
I can hear my ancestors clapping.
To my dedication.
Living a education. In the face of annihilation.
Shoulder 2 Shoulder is the formation.
Like a tree trunk.we Rooted. Not polluted or
convoluted.
It's all us for a Movement
Non profit corporations don't get us confused with.



A DEATH IN A CLOSED SYSTEM: HOW VIRGINIA'S PRISON MACHINERY HELPED CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT KILLED OFFICER JEREMY HALL

by an UPROAR member, November 2025

On November 17, 2025, Corrections Officer Jeremy Lewis Hall, 40, was killed at River North Correctional Center (RNCC). Within hours, Virginia's political and media apparatus settled on a familiar story: a "vicious, unprovoked attack," a fallen hero, an unforeseeable tragedy. But what people inside RNCC, and across western Virginia prisons, had been reporting for months tells a different story. Hall did not die

in a vacuum. He died in a system built around collective punishment, manufactured crisis, and tight control over information—the same conditions that have already killed incarcerated people and will keep killing unless they're dismantled.

River North Was Already Under Extreme Pressure

RNCC didn't suddenly become volatile on November 17. On September 8, 2025, men in C-2 reportedly set themselves and their mattresses on fire twice—around 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The next morning there was another attempt; alarms went off and movement was curtailed. Instead of bringing in outside review or addressing mental-health conditions, RNCC leadership: ordered a 60-day lockdown of the pod, and shut off phones and kiosks so "nobody could report it." People inside described this not as crisis management, but as a deliberate blackout. UPROAR documented those events and the blackout in this public briefing:

> Investigate the Sept 8 River North prison fires

At the same time, RNCC and other western prisons were rolling out a new "privileges and incentives" regime that punishes entire pods if one person is charged—seizing tablets, cutting visits and commissary, and locking people down for weeks. This directly violates Operating Procedure 861.1, which requires discipline to be individual, post-adjudication, and time-limited. Instead of relieving tension, these group punishments pressurized whole units, pushing already desperate people toward hunger strikes, fires, and self-harm.

"They Knew This Was Going to Happen"

Shortly after Hall's death, TikTok creator @second_chancer shared what an RNCC staff source said happened. According to that source:

The night before the killing, someone went to security with a credible threat that an officer would be attacked. The prison locked down, but no shakedowns or weapon searches were conducted. "They did nothing more than open the doors" the next morning. Hall came on shift, did count, and was told to run pill call and chow call at the same time—a clear safety violation, because an officer can't safely supervise two high-movement posts at once. While juggling both, he was attacked from behind and stabbed; an officer in training and a K-9 officer were also stabbed.

The source says staff were in "a state of rebellion" because management "could have and should have protected that officer," and that Hall's wife first learned of his death on Facebook. The warden and assistant warden were reportedly placed on administrative leave.

This is not random chaos. It's credible warnings ignored, policies violated, and movement increased inside a unit already under extreme pressure, in a facility that had just used a fire-and-blackout response to suppress information. As incarcerated journalist Kevin "Rashid" Johnson has written for years at <https://www.rashidmod.com>, violence thrives when communication is blocked and leadership is never held to account.

People Inside—and the Public—Warned Virginia Officials

The policy that helped create this pressure cooker did not come out of nowhere, and it did not go unchallenged. On September 1, 2025, VADOC rolled out its collective punishment regime across Red Onion, Wallens Ridge, River North, and Keen Mountain. In response, families

and supporters launched coordinated ActionNetwork campaigns:

End Collective Punishment / Enforce OP 861.1

By late November, this tool alone had sent over 3,800 letters from more than a hundred Virginians to DOC leadership, oversight, the Governor, AG, and legislators. It documented RNCC's Sept 8–9 fires and blackout, a 30-day Keen Mountain lockdown after an isolated mental-health incident, and a hunger strike in Red Onion A-6, warning that collective punishment was "increasing internal pressure and producing desperate, life-threatening behavior."

Urgent: End Torture, Retaliation, and Medical Neglect in Virginia Prisons

This letter laid out a "documented state of emergency" at Red Onion, Wallens Ridge, Keen Mountain, and River North: beatings of restrained prisoners, "ghost trays," at least six self-immolations, live-round "red line" threats, and retaliatory transfers of whistleblowers like Kevin "Rashid" Johnson and Ekong Eshiet.

C-1 Kiosk Outage at Red Onion: Contract Violation & Communication Blackout

This campaign exposed a months-long outage of the only charging kiosk in Red Onion's C-1 pod—where many "safety agreement" refusers and whistleblowers are housed—despite Contract DOC-14-074's 72-hour repair requirement.

On October 4, Rashid published "THROUGH COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT VIRGINIA OFFICIALS PROMPT PRISONERS TO VIOLENTLY POLICE EACH OTHER." On October 24, supporters read that article aloud outside VADOC headquarters, demanding that Commissioner Chadwick Dotson and Chief of Operations A. David Robinson be fired and that Red Onion and Wallens Ridge be closed.

Families have echoed those demands in petitions, including:

Petitions to fire Commissioner Chadwick Dotson

By the time Hall was killed, Virginia officials had been repeatedly and specifically warned—by prisoners, by families, by thousands of letters—that collective punishment, blackouts, and retaliation were pushing these prisons toward exactly this kind of lethal incident. They knew. They chose not to act.

Whose Lives Count?

In the week after Hall's death, Virginia saw wall-to-wall coverage: front-page stories, repeated TV segments, official statements, flags at half-staff.

Meanwhile, families of people who died inside struggled to get even basic answers:

At Greenville, 38-year-old Michael Dove's mother, Rhonda, says he attempted suicide in February, had deteriorating mental and physical health, and repeatedly sought help. After his April death, VADOC told her they couldn't release details because he was "no longer in their custody"—a rationale journalists couldn't find in any Virginia statute.

Months later, also at Greenville, 40-year-old Christopher Armentrout died. His stepmother was told DOC had 256 pages of records but would withhold all of them "at its discretion."

At Wallens Ridge, 27-year-old Aubrey McKay was found dead with blunt force trauma, injuries consistent with shackling, and a fractured

larynx. His family is still fighting for a full investigation. No flags lowered. No extended news cycle. No coordinated mourning.

The Civilian Deaths in Custody 2024 report (RD402) confirmed that: VADOC—not the state—controls all prison death data, and the working group tasked with recommending reforms was barred from reviewing individual prison death cases. In other words: the same agency responsible for these deaths decides what, if anything, the public and even oversight bodies get to see. That information chokehold is the real engine of impunity.

This Is a Political System—And It Has Political Protectors

The conditions that killed Hall, Dove, Armentrout, McKay, and at least 97 incarcerated people in VADOC in 2024 are not accidents. They are the outcome of decisions made and defended by:

- the Governor
- the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
- the Attorney General
- the General Assembly's Public Safety and Appropriations Committees
- Commissioner Chadwick Dotson
- Chief of Operations A. David Robinson

These officials have been put on notice—via documented fires, hunger strikes, self-immolations, lawsuits, protests, and thousands of letters—and have chosen to maintain a system of collective punishment and information control anyway. Hall did not die in a vacuum. His blood, and the blood of those who died before him, is on the hands of everyone who ignored these warnings.

What Has to Change—and Who Has to Lead It

Breaking this cycle will require both legal change and organized power outside the prisons. On the legal side, Virginia needs at minimum:

A real death-in-custody law that puts investigations in independent hands and guarantees timely disclosure to families.

A ban on collective punishment, with teeth to enforce OP 861.1.

A Right to Contact law protecting phone, kiosk, and mail access from retaliatory blackouts.

Transparent reporting on lockdowns, staffing, use of force, and deaths by facility.

But laws don't pass or get enforced on their own. That's why Kevin "Rashid" Johnson has called for PAPA—People Against Prison Abuse, a union of prisoners' loved ones capable of acting as an organized pressure group:

- A Call to Organize a Prisoner Support Network Composed of Prisoners' Loved Ones – PAPA (People Against Prison Abuse)

His point is simple: almost everyone in Black, Brown, and poor white communities "has loved ones or know someone in prison." Isolated, families are easy to ignore. Organized, they can become one of the most powerful forces in public life—a bloc that can't be bought off, grant-managed, or easily divided.

UPROAR (Uniting Prisoners' Relatives Organizing Against Repression)—<https://bit.ly/join-uproar>—is one attempt to build that

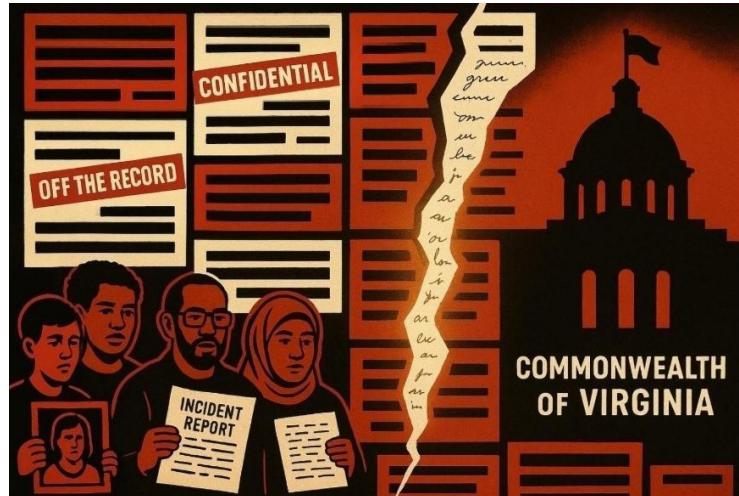
union in Virginia: a formation of loved ones, directly impacted people, and inside correspondents coordinating documentation, campaigns, and political education across facilities.

The path forward is clear:

- Document every fire, beating, death, hunger strike, blackout.
- Expose them publicly—through letters, media, hearings, and campaigns.
- Organize families, friends, and communities into lasting structures, not just crisis responses.
- Demand concrete legal changes that cut into VADOC's monopoly over information and punishment.

Until the information regime is dismantled, the violence will continue.

If Virginia wants safety—for the people who live in these prisons and for the people who work in them—it has to start by breaking the blackout



“HEARD, NOT HELPED”: OUR MEETING WITH VIRGINIA’S GOVERNOR-ELECT ON PRISON ABUSE

by an UPROAR member, November 2025

Key Points

On October 31, 2025, a coalition of formerly incarcerated people, grieving families, and parole advocates met privately with Abigail Spanberger's gubernatorial campaign, now the governor-elect's team.

People described parole as functionally dead, conditions they experience as torture, and deaths in custody with no meaningful investigation.

The campaign staffer offered empathy but no concrete commitments on parole, VADOC leadership, or independent oversight.

This is why UPROAR focuses on organized pressure from prisoners' loved ones and survivors, not on access to “listening sessions.”

Who Was in the Room

On our side:

- Formerly incarcerated people from Wallens Ridge, Red Onion, and other Virginia prisons.
- Parole advocates working daily with people denied year after year.
- Family of people who died in custody, including the mother and aunt of Aubrey McKay, who died at Wallens Ridge 30 days before his scheduled release.
- Mental health and legal advocates, many with loved ones still inside.
- Prisoner- and loved-ones-led groups, including UPROAR and a Prisoners' Rights Clinic.

The campaign called it a “listening session” and asked that it be off the record. We are honoring that by not quoting staff directly and by being clear that this is our recollection and interpretation, not a transcript.

What We Raised

1. Parole Is Functionally Dead

One parole advocate described people with 30+ years in, clean records, and extensive transformation being denied on repeat with the same boilerplate:

“Day in and day out, I assist individuals that are coming up for parole... we are getting no's repetitively, consistently, with the same rubber stamp... People are getting denied that have been in prison for 35 years with no infractions... These people are dying.”

With the election four days away, they asked for a clear stance: “I really wanted to hear more of a definitive where she stands... it's only four days left.”

Our summary of the response:

The staffer said the Governor's Office has more direct impact on the justice system, that they're hearing concerns about the Parole Board, and that her role was to listen and take notes.

We did not receive a definitive position on changing parole policy or the near-zero grant rate.

2. Death in Custody & Conditions Described as Torture

One mother, speaking about her son Aubrey McKay:

“I miss my son, and I don't understand why my son had to be murdered by the hands of ones who are supposed to serve and protect... I'm suffering cancer, I'm suffering lupus, and I have to do it all alone now because my son is not coming home to sit through these chemo's with me.”

Her sister, Aubrey's aunt, described how he was returned:

“They sent my sister a wet t-shirt, one slipper, and a pair of boxers that wasn't his property... That's heartbreaking... Families are hurting... We gotta keep on applying pressure, because that's what it seems like it's gonna take.”

A formerly incarcerated speaker who spent six years at Wallens Ridge said:

“I was more afraid up there to lose my life than anywhere else... not by convicts or inmates, but at the hands of them officers.”

“It's like an episode from the movie Roots up there... I've been shot by electric shields, chained down to the bed naked for days, had dogs sicced on me... I've seen these people take life up there and not be held accountable.”

On parole, they added:

"I got turned down for parole 17 times... You mean to tell me the whole world can change in 30 or 40 years, but people can't? That's insane... People are dying, their families are suffering... If they want our support, support us."

Over and over, people described being treated as less than human, and prison practices they experience as torture and deliberate neglect.

Our summary of the response:

From our notes:

The staffer expressed sorrow to Aubrey's mother, said she couldn't imagine what the family was going through, and thanked them for their strength.

She later said her "takeaways" included the need for a fairer Parole Board and more transparency at VADOC, and invited follow-up by email.

She showed interest in reentry and literacy programs like Resilience Edge.

We did not hear concrete commitments to:

Investigate Aubrey's death,

Confront violence at Wallens Ridge and Red Onion, or

Change who runs VADOC.

3. Leadership, Nepotism, and Mental Health

One advocate spoke directly about VADOC leadership:

"We need a new DOC director. That's the emergent thing, as well as fixing parole. He's related to all the people he's supervising, and he's enabling nepotism and abuse."

A mental health advocate, writing to and about many men inside, said:

"I write about 17 men, including my son, but the biggest issue is mental health... Most of the men are not getting the type of mental health that they need... There is not enough mental health treatment."

Advocates alleged that family networks and close relationships inside VADOC create nepotism and impunity, and that lack of real mental health care is deepening trauma rather than healing it.

Our summary of the response:

As time ran out, the staffer thanked everyone again and ended the call.

We did not hear any specific response to the demand for new DOC leadership.

What the Meeting Made Clear

From our side:

- A parole system with a grant rate under 1% is effectively life-without-parole.
- Families and survivors described Virginia prisons as sites of torture-like practices, medical neglect, and death, followed by dehumanizing treatment of loved ones.
- The Governor directly controls the Parole Board and VADOC leadership and cannot claim neutrality.

From the governor-elect's team, our takeaway:

We were listened to and thanked.

We did not receive concrete commitments on:

- Changing parole policy or grant rates,
- Replacing VADOC leadership, or
- Supporting independent oversight with real access and enforcement.

Empathy was offered; commitments were not.

Fear, Information Control, and Why We're Publishing

Even writing this, we asked each other:

What can we safely share from a meeting we organized, about abuses we've been documenting for years?

That hesitation is part of how the Commonwealth and VADOC maintain power:

They control the records and what counts as "official."

They invoke "confidentiality," "security," and "off the record" on their own terms.

Families and advocates end up doubting whether they're "allowed" to describe their own words.

The fight over parole, deaths in custody, and prison conditions is also a fight over who gets to tell the truth in public.

Publishing this report is one small refusal of that information-dominance.

Why Organizing Is Not Optional

Being heard in a private Zoom is not the same as having power.

We brought mothers, aunts, survivors, and long-time advocates into a room with the governor-elect's team. We got sympathy and note-taking. We did not get structural commitments. That gap is exactly why UPROAR exists.

Our loved ones inside have said it for years: as long as we act alone—one complaint here, one meeting there—officials can absorb our pain without changing course. Only organization turns grief and outrage into something they have to account for.

When we say organizing here, we mean the kind of work UPROAR was created for:

Bringing prisoners' loved ones together into a real pressure and support network so no one is left isolated, powerless, or guessing what to do when abuse happens.

Uniting mothers, families, and community members into a "union of prisoners' loved ones" big enough to hit officials where they actually feel it: their public image, their careers, and their ability to operate without scrutiny.

Building structures that can coordinate work—inside and outside people who can reach other loved ones, support each other in addressing abuses, and develop strategies of protest, exposure, and resistance instead of pleading with the system one by one.

This meeting is one front in that work. It shows we cannot rely on access to officials; we have to build our own collective strength as prisoners' loved ones, survivors, and comrades on the outside.

"Power is the ability to define phenomena and make it act in a desired manner." — Huey P. Newton

Right now, the Commonwealth and its DOC define the "problem," the acceptable level of suffering, and the pace of "reform." Organizing is how we begin to redefine the crisis on our own terms and become a force they must respond to, not just listen to.

We aren't sharing this to vent about one call. We're sharing it because it confirms what our loved ones have been saying all along: nothing changes for us without organizing.

If you are a family member, friend, survivor, or someone who refuses to look away, we're not asking you to "wait and see" what this administration does. We're asking you to help build the organized pressure that can make any administration act.

CHRONICLE OF THE STRUGGLE: OCTOBER 2025

We offer the following email, sent to our network in October 2025, as a snapshot in time—a preserved moment in our ongoing fight. It shows the raw testimony and clear demands that have fueled our organizing. The rally date has passed, but the crisis it documented is unresolved, and the collective power it sought to build has only grown.

Families and loved ones are rising up against the torture, sexual abuse, starvation, and retaliation happening inside Virginia's prisons.

Friday, October 24, 2025 3–6 PM

6900 Block of Midlothian Turnpike, Richmond, VA (public median/ roadside near VADOC HQ)

RSVP or sign up to speak:bit.ly/october-rally-rsvp [Link to the passed 2025 rally event.]

Why We're Rallying

After a year of public outcry, the state's new "corrections ombudsman" has proven incapable of delivering justice or accountability.

At her October meetings, families once again testified to the horrors inside Red Onion and Wallens Ridge:

As Radio IQ reported, Capitol Police were called in when parents like Pertell Gilmore refused to stay quiet. Gilmore's son, Taneak Turner, was shot in the face with rubber bullets by Wallens Ridge guards.

As VPM News covered, loved ones like Tyraecia Williams El described their sons being starved, stripped, and collectively punished — while the ombudsman admitted her office can't investigate these very abuses.

Self-immolations continue, even after VADOC's bogus "safety agreement" meant to deflect accountability.

Read the coverage:

VPM:Families call for more communication from Virginia's corrections department¹

Radio IQ:Frustrations spill out at Dept. of Corrections ombudsman meeting²

The Crisis Continues

Guards beat Aubrey McKay to death at Wallens Ridge in June.

Read more: bit.ly/justice-for-aubrey-mckay [Link to a past+ongoing campaign page.]

Taneak Turner was shot in the face by staff — and self-immolations continue inside Red Onion.

Medical neglect, starvation, retaliation, and racist violence are daily realities inside VADOC.

Our Demands

End torture, sexual abuse, and collective punishment

Stop retaliation against whistleblowers and families

Shut down Red Onion & Wallens Ridge

Fire corrupt VADOC leadership

Create independent oversight with real enforcement power

Take Action

RSVP or volunteer to speak:bit.ly/october-rally-rsvp [Link to the passed 2025 rally event.]

Join our email list for updates & action alerts:bit.ly/uproar-email-list [Link is active.]

Print and Distribute/Hang Flyers: [Links to 2025 downloads are now archived.]

Quarter-sheet handouts (for canvassing & tabling) [Link was here.]

Full-size posters (for stores, campuses & community boards) [Link was here.]

Share the posts in dm's and stories: [Links promoted the 2025 rally.]

Facebook [Link was here.]



Instagram [Link was here.]

Show up. Speak out. Stand with families.

Directly impacted people are invited to share their experiences and demands — this is your platform, your power, your movement.

UPROAR

References

The original email linked to the following news coverage, which remains accessible online:

VPM:Families call for more communication from Virginia's corrections department(<https://www.vpm.org/news/2025-10-09/vadoc-andrea-sapone-red-onion-prison-abuse-claims-williams-hunter>)

Radio IQ (WVTF):Frustrations spill out at Dept. of Corrections ombudsman meeting(<https://www.wvtf.org/news/2025-10-02/frustrations-spill-out-at-dept-of-corrections-ombudsman-meeting>)

This snapshot is part of a longer story. The fight it captured is still building. To join this ongoing struggle and help shape what comes next, connect with our current work:

bit.ly/uproar-email-list

bit.ly/join-uproar UPROAR

DEMOCRATS ARE NOT YOUR PARTY

by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, March 10, 2020

The Democrats for Blacks? A Cruel Trick

It's an election year and the Democrats are busy attempting to woo the Black vote. One wonders how we've forgotten that not so long ago the Democrats were the party of lynching, Jim Crow segregation, and—right alongside the Republicans—the political arm of the Ku Klux Klan. And before that it was the party of slavery, founded in 1828 by Andrew Jackson—one of the largest slaveholders of his day and a notorious, genocidal Indian killer.

And not just that, it was the Democrats who, having won an 80 seat majority in the Senate in 1874, led the overthrow of Black Reconstruction in the South (kicking Blacks out of political office, destroying Black businesses, churches, and schools, reducing us back to slave-like conditions, etc.), and afterwards organized untold numbers of white riots against Black communities that saw hundreds of Blacks raped and murdered by white mobs.

Jewish people the world over vow to never forget the crimes of the

German Nazi party against their people.

So how has this original Nazi party (namely, the Democrats) that was the root of so much anti-Black terror, suffering and death come to be identified as a representative party of Blacks in Amerika today, so that every election season we see Black voters almost unanimously endorsing its candidates?

There had to have been a cruel trick involved. And there was!

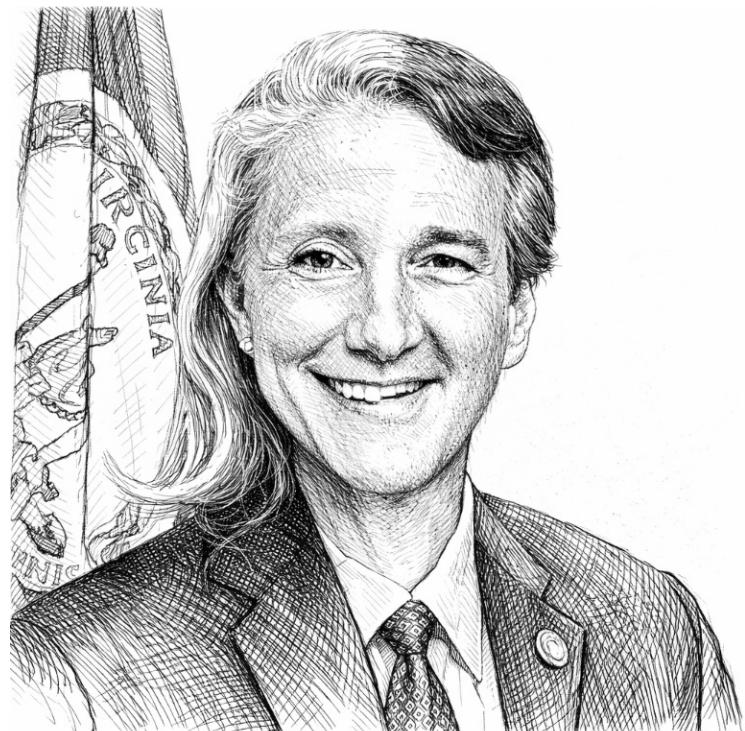
This state of affairs literally happened overnight during the early 1960s. It was done actually to subvert and redirect the grassroots struggles of Blacks against segregation, police abuse and murders, poverty, racism and all the other evils we suffered then, because those struggles were threatening to really end our abuse. In fact, we continue to suffer the very same abuses today, exactly because we were tricked into joining the 'Democratic coalition,' believing it would solve our problems, when as said the Democrats had the exact opposite intentions in mind.

Real Politricks—Jacksonian Democracy

To understand what happened and how, we should begin with the party's founder, Andrew Jackson, and the deceptive form of politics he popularized that came to be known as "Jacksonian Democracy." This form of politics came to replace the old system of unconcealed monopoly on power by wealthy white male property owners to serve their own interests. It became necessary to disguise their self-serving monopoly on power because of growing struggles by the lower classes for recognition of their needs and a proportional share of political of power.

Of course people of color and women had no rights then and were suppressed by all males, rich and poor, so no concern was given to placating them.

Jackson's political method was to pretend to care about, to speak for, and to promise change to the lower class white males, but to actually do nothing to benefit them except implement minor token reforms, all to preserve the established order—while violently repressing efforts of the lower sectors to go beyond the reforms Democrats were willing to offer.



He also played to the middle classes.

As a result he won a wide range of professionals and businessmen and even organized labor to support the Democrats, even as he sent troops to break workers' strikes.

As historian Howard Zinn noted, "Jackson was the first President to master the liberal rhetoric to speak for the common man." [1] A method that was two-faced by nature. "The Jacksonian method," Zinn explained, "was to achieve stability and control by winning to the Democratic party 'the middling interest, and especially ... the substantial yeomanry of the country' by 'prudent, judicious, well-considered reform.' That is, reform that would not yield too much. These were the words of Robert Rantoul, a reformist, corporation lawyer, and Jacksonian Democrat. It was a forecast of the successful appeal of the Democratic party—and at times the Republican party—in the twentieth century." [2]

So the essence of Jacksonian Democracy was to pretend to give a voice to disempowered people, to lull them into submission to the oppressive status quo, while remaining prepared to violently suppress those who seek more than token reforms that change nothing.

Which brings us to when and why the notoriously anti-Black Democrats suddenly become the pretend party of Blacks.

Democrats Subvert Black Liberation

During the 1950s-60s the Black struggle against Jim Crow segregation, lynching, etc. went into high gear. Blacks began fighting back and uniting on a national scale to upset the status quo.

These efforts culminated in a planned mass siege on the capital, where hundreds of thousands of Blacks from all over the country planned to converge on Washington, DC in 1963 to shut the city down, and not leave until their concerns were resolved.

THIS was the event that prompted the Democrats and their sitting President, John F. Kennedy, Jr., to suddenly pretend to care about and give a voice to Blacks. Their actual concern, however, was simply to gain control of the Black struggle, and stop the planned siege which would have been a PR and political nightmare for Kennedy and Co., who were busy portraying the US to the world as a racial and cultural melting pot of democratic freedom for all.

The US was engaged in an image war with the USSR in efforts to sway the newly liberated nations of color away from Communism and into alliances with Amerika, so the US could gain preferential access to and exploit their natural resources and labor power in place of the recently expelled Europeans.

Images of US Blacks fighting against oppressive conditions much like those these nations had just fought to break free of themselves would certainly alienate them from Amerika, and prove exactly what the USSR was reporting to the world about Amerika—reports US officials were dismissing as false Communist propaganda.

Suddenly, the Democratic Party became the party of Black civil rights, and brought the most prominent voices of the Civil Rights movement, (the so-called Big Six, which included Martin Luther King, Jr.), into the 'Democratic Coalition.'

The Big Six were in disputes over money needed to fund their work, so Kennedy had his financial backers offer them huge sums and give them access to the mainstream media, if they would bring the Black movement and planned siege under control. It was pure Jacksonian Democracy.

The Big Six went for it, literally selling out the movement. The planned grassroots siege was subverted and transformed into the August 1963 event that came to be known as the March on Washington, where King gave his famous "I Have a Dream Speech." Malcolm X witnessed the entire affair and criticized it in his Nov 1963, "Message to the Grassroots" speech. He described it as follows:

"The Negroes were out there in the streets. They were talking about how they were going to march on Washington.... That they were going to march on Washington, march on the Senate, march on the White House, march on the Congress, and tie it up, bring it to a halt, not let the government proceed. They even said they were going out to the airport and lay down on the runway and not let the airplanes land. I'm telling you what they said. That was the revolution. That was the black revolution.

"It was the grass roots out there in the street. It scared the white man to death, scared the white power structure in Washington, DC to death; I was there. When they found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, they called in... these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, 'Call it off,' Kennedy said. Look you all are letting this thing go too far.' And Old Tom said, 'Boss, I can't stop it because I didn't start it.' I'm telling you what they said. They said, 'I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it.'

"They said, 'These Negroes are doing things on their own. They're running ahead of us.' And that old shrewd fox, he said, 'If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it.'

"This is what they did with the March on Washington. They joined it... became part of it, took it over. And as they took it over, it lost its militancy. It ceased to be angry, it ceased to be hot, it ceased to be uncompromising. Why it even ceased to be a march. It became a picnic, a circus. Nothing but a circus, with clowns and all....

"No, it was a sellout. It was a takeover.... They controlled it so tight, they told those Negroes what time to hit town, where to stop, what signs to carry, what songs to sing, what speech they could make, and then told them to get out of town by sundown...."

Malcolm pointed out that the people knew they'd been duped and it would lead to a "long hot summer" of Black revolt. And true to his predictions Blacks rose up in city after city in revolts beginning during that following summer of 1964, and continuing every year until 1968.

His description is the literal truth of how the Democrats subverted the Black struggle for change. In his book *A Thousand Days*, Kennedy's White House advisor Arthur Schlesinger gave the same account as Malcolm, but as an inside witness to the 1963 scheme with which "Kennedy moved to incorporate the Negro revolution into the democratic coalition."

But that's not the end of the story.

Kennedy Stacks the Deck to Ensure that Black Civil Rights Fail

Not only did Kennedy use the Civil Rights movement to subvert the genuine Black struggle against racism and economic oppression, he also made sure that newly enacted civil rights laws would not work to benefit Blacks. The Democrats thus doubly tricked Blacks.

Remember, Kennedy's whole purpose for pretending to back Black

civil rights was to stop our independent efforts to end our intolerable conditions. As Malcolm X said, he, like the Democrats in general, was a "shrewd fox."

So, while Kennedy put on a public face of promoting Black civil rights (a bogus image that persists 'til today), he packed the federal courts of the South with the most notoriously racist judges who he knew would not enforce the new federal civil rights laws, refused to enforce these laws himself, had Justice Department lawyers and FBI agents stand by as racist Southern police brutalized Black voters in federal buildings, and so on.[3]

This was two-faced Jacksonian Democracy used now against Blacks, to stop us from resisting segregation, lynchings, police murders and abuse, terror and violence at the hands of white racists, and endemic poverty and discrimination of every variety. And it's still used against us today by the Democratic Party.

I make only passing mention of the Republican Party because it has never made any credible attempts to pretend to represent Black interests during or since the civil rights era. In fact, when Kennedy and the Democrats suddenly switched horses in 1963 to pretend to support the Civil Rights Movement, their huge white Southern base was vocal about feeling betrayed. The Republicans promptly moved to win them over, which was accomplished under the "Southern Strategy" devised by Richard Nixon. Their white constituency is the 'silent majority' that today still forms Republican's largest and most loyal base, and has been so blindly supportive of Donald Trump and his open appeals to traditional racist sentiments.

MLK Wakes Up to the Democrats' Game

In the aftermath of the government-controlled March on Washington, the "long hot summer" that followed, and Malcolm X's scathing criticism, King came to realize that he'd been manipulated and used by the Democrats to betray and mislead his own people's struggle.

He came out against the Civil Rights movement and rejected its pro-capitalist leadership, including such notables as Jesse Jackson. He was revealed to have embraced socialism and opposed Black integration into capitalist Amerika. His agenda changed to one of fundamentally changing the entire capitalist edifice and status quo, and supporting workers and all oppressed peoples. He further criticized Amerika as not a peacemaker but as a warmonger and "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world."

Finally, to amend for his having misled the 1963 march on Washington, he organized to lead a "Poor people's encampment" to lay siege to DC in the summer of 1968.

King's stance exposed the establishment's pretensions of promoting equality, indeed its role as a source and defender of economic and racial inequality. In turn the establishment, under both parties' administrations, saw him as a threat to their existing order, and subjected him to increasing government surveillance, harassment, and ultimately assassinated him.

The roles of the numerous government agencies under both parties that were involved in King's murder, its cover-up, and the unpublicized lawsuit the King family filed AND WON against the federal government in 1999 for his assassination, are detailed in attorney William Pepper's book, *An Act of State: The Execution of Martin Luther King* (2003).

The Democrats Are Still Playing Jacksonian Democracy With Us

What most don't know is not only did the Democrats use the Civil Rights movement and its leaders to subvert Blacks struggling against oppression, but both parties devised and have acted to create false government-controlled Black mis-leaders to misguide and keep us in this state.

This scheme was first laid out in 1967 by FBI assistant director William E. Sullivan. The plan was to destroy King and other influential independent Black leaders, including Malcolm X, and replace them with mis-leaders created and approved by the establishment.

Sullivan wrote of the intended implementation and outcome of this plan: "When this is done, and it can AND WILL BE DONE, obviously much confusion will reign, particularly among the Negro people.... The Negroes will be left without a national leader of sufficiently compelling personality to steer them in the proper direction."

As I've detailed elsewhere, Barack Obama was just such a Black mis-leader groomed and used by the establishment, (and foisted on us by the Democrats), who tried to disarm our struggles with promises of false "hope" in the status quo, while selling us a false bill that racism no longer existed in Amerika so our fight was over. (4)

Remember, he publicly denounced his own minister, Jeremiah Wright, for speaking out against government neglect and abuse of Blacks.

Under these banners he did absolutely nothing to address Black oppression nor that of any other groups. And when he was forced to acknowledge the continued prevalence of racism by worldwide reactions to social media exposures of the murder of unarmed Black youth Mike Brown by a white cop in Ferguson, MO, his body being left lying for hours on public display in the street by cops (as an obvious lynch-style terror tactic against the Black community), and the militaristic police response to community protest, all Obama did was excuse the cop and make a token appearance in a Black church to lead the congregation in singing "Amazing Grace."

Just as the Democrats used him and Bill Clinton in 2005 to stage token visits to hospitalized victims of Hurricane Katrina with major media coverage, to quell Black and international outrage with the government's mistreatment and neglect of Blacks during that crisis. While nothing was done to address the official racism that produced this crisis, what has ended was one of the largest mass gentrification and Black displacement moves on record.

But Blacks were so emotionally intoxicated with seeing a dark face in the White House (a genuine House negro), they overlooked the fact that Obama cared nothing about their plight nor doing anything to remedy it.

Conclusion

So, our rush to the polls every election season is nothing but a futile exercise in chasing false leadership, that's put before us to keep us in the same rut we've been in for generations. It's no irony, as many seem to think, that we still suffer brutal abuse, official neglect, police terror, systemic economic disadvantage, and racist oppression in the 21st century. It's been by design of a duplicitous system meant to keep us misinformed, confused and contained by organized deception and violence.

It's time we wake up and develop a genuine revolutionary leadership

of our own making and with our bosom interests at heart. Cuz the Democrats definitely ain't it!

Black people have no political power under Amerika's two-party system. Like Comrade George Jackson said, choosing between these parties is like picking which of two ways we prefer to suffer and die.

What we need is a revolutionary party drawn from our own ranks, based in our communities, and answerable to us.

It's time we organize for fundamental change and stop being a political football kicked from pillar to post between the Democrats and Republicans, who ignore us until election season rolls around and then only makes opportunist token appeals to us to help put one or the other of their candidates in office, while between elections our needs and suffering continue to go ignored.

Build and support the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party and the Panther Solidarity Organization!

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!

Notes

[1] Howard Zinn, *A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES-1492 TO PRESENT* (NY: Harper Perennial, 2003), p. 215

[2] Ibid, pp. 457-58

[3] See, Howard Zinn, *S.N.C.C.: THE NEW ABOLITIONISTS* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), pp. 203-06

[4] See, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Uncle Sam in Blackface: Barack Obama and the Designs of US Imperialism" (2009) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=995>; see also, *PANTHER VISION: ESSENTIAL PARTY WRITINGS AND ART OF KEVIN "RASHID" JOHNSON* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb, 2014), pp. 335-50

COALITION OF PRISON REFORM ADVOCATES, CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS, AND FAMILIES UNITE TO DEMAND GOVERNOR SPANBERGER FIRE VADOC LEADERS CHADWICK DOTSON, DAVID ROBINSON, KEVIN MCCOY, AND DAVID ANDERSON

by an UPROAR member, 2025

Richmond, VA— In a stunning show of unity, both correctional officers and incarcerated people — two groups rarely on the same side of the barbed wire — have joined forces to demand that Governor Abigail Spanberger immediately terminate Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) Director Chadwick Dotson, Chief of Corrections Operations David Robinson, and Wise County wardens Kevin McCoy and David Anderson.

The unprecedented dual petitions — one launched by COs themselves and another by prisoners and their families — paint a damning picture of a department collapsing under the weight of nepotism, cronyism,

corruption, and cruelty. Both petitions describe a culture of fear, incompetence, and unchecked abuse, which has festered under Dotson and Robinson's leadership and been enforced on the ground by McCoy and Anderson.

The prisoners' petition can be found at <https://www.change.org/p/demand-the-resignation-of-chadwick-dotson-and-david-robinson> and the correctional officers' petition is available at <https://www.change.org/p/fire-dave-robinson-from-virginia-department-of-corrections>.

"This is not reform — it's regression," said a spokesperson for the coalition. "Dotson and Robinson have turned Virginia's prisons into a nightmare of brutality and cover-ups, and McCoy and Anderson have made Wise County the epicenter of it. They've failed the incarcerated, failed the staff, and failed the Commonwealth."

A legacy of failure

Dotson, a retired Wise County judge with no background in corrections, was appointed as a political favor — not because of merit. His tenure has been marked by scandal after scandal, from rampant staff shortages and inmate suicides to documented cases of excessive force and inhumane conditions at Red Onion and Wallens Ridge prisons.

Robinson, his right-hand man, has become synonymous with obstruction and denial, burying reports, silencing whistleblowers, and refusing to hold abusive officers accountable. Together, they have presided over a system that many describe as a state-sponsored human rights disaster.

In the past two years alone, the Virginia DOC has faced multiple lawsuits, federal investigations, and international outrage following a string of self-immolations and suspicious inmate deaths. Among them was Aubrey McKay, whose death is widely believed to have resulted from correctional officer brutality. Yet, Dotson and Robinson's only consistent response has been cover-up and complicity.



Cronyism and corruption in Wise County

Both Dotson and Robinson hail from Wise County, the same region where the state's two most notorious supermax prisons are located. Under their influence, wardens Kevin McCoy and David Anderson have been installed as enforcers of a corrupt network that functions like a family business. Critics say positions and promotions are funneled to political allies and relatives, while grievances, misconduct, and even criminal acts by officers go ignored.

"These four men represent the worst of the old guard," said one organizer. "Dotson, Robinson, McCoy and Anderson have built a culture of cronyism, cruelty, and cover-ups. Their network of nepotism is strangling the system and costing lives."

Unlikely allies, united for justice

That prisoners and officers alike are calling for the same resignations speaks volumes. The CO petition describes Robinson as "incompetent," while the prisoner petition accuses all four leaders of "protecting abusers and destroying morale across the department."

"This coalition represents the unheard voices of both sides of the bars," said the coalition's joint statement. "When the guards and the guarded agree that leadership has failed, it's not a management issue — it's a moral emergency."

A call to Governor Spanberger

Advocates are demanding that Governor Spanberger intervene immediately, remove Dotson, Robinson, McCoy, and Anderson, and launch an independent inquiry into systemic abuse and corruption within VADOC.

"Governor Spanberger must act now to restore trust, transparency, and humanity to Virginia's prisons," the statement concludes. "Every day these men remain in power, more lives are at risk."

THE HIDDEN VEINS OF RACISM: A HISTORY OF RACIAL INJUSTICE IN WISE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

by an UPROAR member, 2025

Wise County, nestled deep in the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia, is often romanticized for its coal-mining legacy and tight-knit communities. However, beneath this veneer lies a darker legacy rooted in systemic racism, segregation, and the perpetuation of white supremacy. Nowhere is this history more visible than in the small town of Pound, Virginia. The area's founding families, such as the Dotsons, the Mullinses, and others, played critical roles in shaping both the economy and the social structure of Wise County. As descendants of European settlers, many of these families held land, wielded influence, and maintained a racial hierarchy that marginalized Black, Indigenous, and other non-white residents from the very beginning.

Founding Families and the Foundations of Exclusion

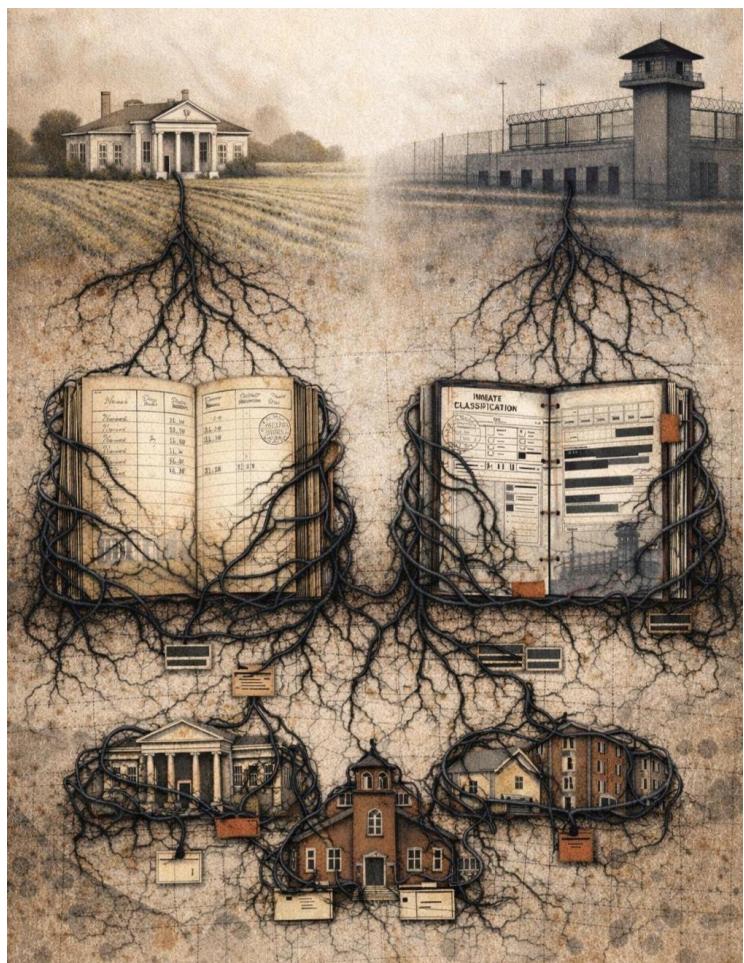
The early 1800s saw the settlement of white families in what would become Wise County. The Dotson and Mullins families were among

the earliest Anglo-European settlers. These families, like many others who established roots in Appalachian Virginia, brought with them the prevailing racial attitudes of the antebellum South. Although Wise County was not home to large plantations like the Tidewater region, slavery did exist—often in smaller numbers, within families that used enslaved Black people for domestic labor or to work small tracts of land. More importantly, these families upheld the ideologies of white dominance through legal, cultural, and social exclusion of people of color, particularly African Americans and Native Americans.

Following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, Wise County, like much of the South, underwent a reconstruction not just of its economy, but of its racial caste system. Freedmen who sought opportunity in the region were met with open hostility, denied employment, land, and access to education. Some families in Pound even formed vigilante groups aimed at intimidating or driving out Black families attempting to settle in the area. While the Ku Klux Klan had strongholds in other parts of Virginia, Wise County saw its own form of racialized violence—often carried out by individuals in law enforcement or local politics who had direct ties to the town's founding families.

Segregation and Educational Disparities

Throughout the 20th century, Wise County practiced both de jure and de facto segregation. Schools were legally segregated until the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, but desegregation in the county was slow, met with intense resistance from white families, especially in Pound. Oral histories from local Black residents describe being bused miles away to attend underfunded "colored schools" while white children attended modern facilities just blocks away. Even after legal integration,



Black students faced harassment from both peers and teachers. The Mullins and Dotson descendants, who had by then integrated into school boards and local government, were often the gatekeepers of these systems.

The Role of Coal Companies and Racial Labor Divides

The coal industry, which came to dominate Wise County's economy in the early 1900s, further entrenched racial divisions. Black workers were often brought in to do the most dangerous, lowest-paying jobs in the mines, while white workers—particularly those with familial ties to local leaders—secured more stable and better-paying positions. Labor unions in the region were slow to integrate, and when they did, Black miners were often excluded from leadership roles. Oral testimonies suggest that white miners in Pound and surrounding areas actively sabotaged attempts at multiracial labor organizing, preserving a racial hierarchy even within shared exploitation.

Law Enforcement and Racial Profiling

Modern accounts of racism in Wise County continue to reflect the deep-rooted legacy of the founding families. Law enforcement in the area, including in Pound, has been criticized for racial profiling and selective prosecution. Black residents and visitors report being stopped disproportionately by police, often for vague reasons like "looking suspicious" or "being out of place." Several cases of police brutality and excessive sentencing have emerged, but few result in accountability—especially when the officers involved have deep family roots in the county, tracing back to the original settlers.

Cultural Erasure and Resistance

In addition to anti-Black racism, the county has a long history of erasing Indigenous presence. The region was originally home to the Cherokee and Shawnee peoples, yet historical narratives in Wise County schools and museums focus almost exclusively on white settler heritage. Local celebrations, genealogies, and historical commissions emphasize the legacy of families like the Dotsons and Mullinses while minimizing or completely omitting the stories of Black and Indigenous people who lived, worked, and resisted in the same space.

Despite this, resistance has always been part of Wise County's racial history. Black churches in Pound and surrounding towns served as hubs of organizing, spiritual strength, and education. In more recent years, young activists have begun documenting these buried histories, challenging the dominant narratives, and calling for justice and accountability in local institutions. Social media has played a role in highlighting racial disparities in the county, despite efforts by some long-time residents to downplay or deny the problem.

Conclusion

Racism in Wise County, Virginia, is not an anomaly—it is a structure that was built, brick by brick, by the very families who claimed dominion over the land. From the Dotsons and Mullinses to the modern institutions they helped create, racial inequality has shaped life in Pound and beyond. Only by confronting this history honestly can the community begin to dismantle the systems that still marginalize people of color today. The past is not just prologue—it is still very much present in the daily experiences of those living in Wise County. A new history must be written—one that includes every voice and reckons with every injustice.

UPROAR CALLS OUT VIRGINIA OMBUDSMAN AT PUBLIC MEETINGS (2025)

by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, October 30, 2025

The Virginia legislature created an ombudsman's office in July 2024, charged with overseeing and investigating the Virginia prison system. Andrea Sapone was appointed as ombudsman that September. The creation of this office was backed by advocacy groups who believed the VADOC could be trusted to investigate and correct itself in the wake of protests of prison abuses and a prisoner hunger strike at its supermax Red Onion State Prison, that gained widespread public and media attention and protest.

I was one of the hunger strikers at Red Onion, and endured 71 days without food in protest of conditions and abuses there. I also recognized that the creation of an ombudsman within the VADOC was an empty token gesture and diversion that would only allow the prison system to continue with its abuses as usual business. I expressed this in an article a year ago. (1)

Shortly after the ombudsman's office was created, I helped draw further attention to abuses at Red Onion, by publicizing that numerous men had set themselves on fire there in desperate efforts to be transferred away from the inhumane conditions in the prison.

Initially, the VADOC's director Chadwick Dotson and Red Onion warden David Anderson lied to the media and public denying the prisoner self-immolations. Their lies were exposed by legislators who only days later confirmed the burnings in the press and questioned why they were happening. Media outlets using the Freedom of Information Act also obtained internal email exchanges between Red Onion administrators where they were discussing the prisoner self-burnings and how to stop them. In turn legislators visited Red Onion and confirmed conditions to be inhumane and needing immediate addressing. The ombudsman's office promised to give special focus on Red Onion and its sister supermax, Wallens Ridge.

Recognizing the futility of creating an ombudsman's office and the ineffectiveness of so-called advocacy groups and not-for-profits who trusted and worked in league with our abusers or had their own agendas and economic motives for pretending to stand with prisoners against abuse, I put out a call to create a prisoner support group composed of people who genuinely cared about our treatment, namely prisoners' loved ones and ex-prisoners. From this call UPROAR (Uniting Prisoners' Relative Organizing Against Repression) was born.

It took 10 months for the ombudsman's office to get up and running. In the meantime, conditions at the supermaxes only got worse, while the prisoners who resisted and publicized the conditions like myself were retaliated against—I for one was transferred to South Carolina and kept incommunicado for publicizing and protesting abuses in the VADOC.

Andrea Sapone then held several underpublicized public meetings where her plan was to pretend for the media that her office was busy serving its purpose of visiting and investigating conditions and complaints in the VADOC. She didn't anticipate that UPROAR along with angry loved ones would show up and put the lie to her faking public accountability. Few knew about the first ombudsman meeting. But UPROAR members, including Evi, showed up and pointed out that Salome's office had done absolutely nothing to address the many prisoners' and their loved ones' complaints of abuses in the remote supermaxes.

The next meeting, held on October 2, 2025, got a larger attendance and

more spirited protest from loved ones and UPROAR.

Mothers and fathers of men imprisoned in the VADOC who've been abused and members of UPROAR took the mic. Each was forced to limit their statements to 5 minutes. One mother and UPROAR member Melinda Evans described abuses of her son and other prisoners who've been beaten, tortured and even killed in the supermaxes. One attendee, Dawn of CCCAN, who spoke about official coverups and abuse in Virginia's prisons, and the murder of Aubrey McKay in June 2025 at Wallens Ridge, protested, "I deserve more than five minutes, they're killing people!"

Her son has been physically abused and had contraband planted in his cell by guards. He's also been touched on his genitals by male guards in these remote prisons. Another mother and UPROAR member, April Wright, also spoke. Her son, who's been confined in the VADOC for 8 years, has been beaten, had his nose broken, been picked up by metal restraints on his wrists and ankles, and strapped down to a steel bunk and left naked to urinate and defecate on himself by guards as other prisoners looked on. Evi of UPROAR and a senior staff member of the Virginia ACLU also spoke about inhumane conditions and the terrorizing of prisoners in the supermaxes. Other parents and UPROAR members confronted Sapone, like Dawn, Pertell Gilmore and Tyrecia Williams-El. Pertell's son was shot in the face with rubber buckshot at Wallens Ridge for no justifiable reason. He spoke not only as the parent of an abused son, but also as a victim himself of abuses within the VADOC, where he did time himself. He gave voice to the frustrations of the multitudes of prisoners and loved ones who'd made complaints to the ombudsman that went unanswered. A situation that I foresaw and spoke to a year ago. He said: "All the hurdles and stuff that I've been jumping over already – and all us parents in here – this is just a drop in the pond.

"And nothing has been done as of yet. I know this is a procedure, so it can look good for people to say, 'well we did this, we listen[ed] to them. But it's going in one ear and out the other.'" But the frustrated attendees' complaints didn't go in and out of Sapone's ears, they fell on completely deaf ears as Sapone's colleagues called in capitol police to quietly escort her from the meeting while the frustrated attendees were speaking. She used as a pretext for walking out without answering their questions or concerns, that the righteously frustrated Pertell had raised his voice during his statements and went over the arbitrary 5 minutes time limit.

She was jeered by attendees for showing distrust and lack of identity with the very communities she was supposed to report to by calling in police and leaving in this manner. The ombudsman's next meeting was held on October 9, 2025. Unlike many of the so-called prisoner advocates, UPROAR showed up once again, along with members of Bending Bars and IDEA (Incarceration Doesn't End Achievements).

This time Sapone was accompanied by a large contingent of officials and her attitude was one of smug arrogance and indifference. The attendees left feeling thoroughly disrespected. Further confirmation that nothing can be expected from these token officials whose positions have been created to divert public attention and protests into empty channels. The abuses continue unabated in Virginia's prisons as the people are told to look to this office of indifference for redress.

This reminds me of events that led the original Black Panther Party (BPP) to begin its community survival or Serve the People programs back in the late '60s. There was an intersection in an urban neighborhood where kids who had nowhere else to play were repeatedly run over by cars, because officials refused to put up a stop sign. The distraught community members went before the city councils repeatedly begging for

a stop sign. They were 'allowed' to voice their grievances, but each time were put off with official promises to look into the situation. Nothing was done. Children kept dying in the intersection.

In turn, BPP leaders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale went to the intersection themselves with a shovel, hammer, stop sign and armed. They set up a sign themselves as community members watched. No more kids were run over. From that example other communities with the same problem put up their own stop signs and no more children were run over. The lesson? The people can solve their own problems by taking power into their own hands instead of relying on indifferent officials who only string them along with empty promises, and, like Pertell told the ombudsman, engaging in staged public meetings where they just allow people to voice their grievances to which only go in one ear and out the other.

We must unite the people to put the feet of those responsible for these abuses and the indifference of hirelings like Sapone to the fire of public exposure and cost them their public images and political careers. They being the ELECTED officials in the state legislature, the governor's office, and so on whose very careers are dependent on winning and wooing public opinion, and who therefore make a habit of lying to the public for the purpose of winning undeserved public trust. This is how you force political accountability of these opportunistic politicians while developing our own independent political power by, of and for the people.

This is what UPROAR is about. Join us!

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win! All Power to the People!

Endnotes:

(1) See, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "A New Ombudsman for the Virginia Prison System Is Business as Usual" (2024), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=3660>



LEAKED MEMO: VA. CORRECTIONS OFFICIALS SLOW HIRING AMID 'CRITICAL' STAFF SHORTAGES

by Samuel B. Parker and Luca Powell, April 7, 2025

The Virginia Department of Corrections is slowing hiring and working to cut "unnecessary spending" due to the surging costs of inmate health care, according to an internal memo obtained by the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

The announcement comes months after an internal report found VADOC facilities are "critically and dangerously short-staffed," causing some state prisons to be out of compliance with department policies on medical treatment and staff and inmate safety.

In the memo, issued Thursday, Director Chadwick Dotson said VADOC officials will be "slow(ing) the recruitment, selection, and hiring process for vacancies across the agency" — although Dotson noted that the restrictions will not apply to corrections officers, which the department will continue hiring.

VADOC operates around 50 facilities and oversees around 31,000 inmates. In a statement, department spokesperson Kyle Gibson said the decision "was made as part of our ongoing efforts to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars."

"The safety of VADOC's corrections team, inmates and supervisees, and the security of our facilities remains the agency's top priority," Gibson said.

'Challenging, but necessary'

Dotson's memo attributes the slowdown "almost entirely to rising medical costs."

Since 2020, VADOC's annual medical costs have ballooned nearly 60%, from \$7,941 to \$12,399 per inmate, budget records show. Last year, almost 20% of the department's \$1.6 billion budget went to inmate health care.

That's forced corrections officials' to tighten their belts, Dotson said.

"No new offers of employment will be extended," he wrote. He said he also expected "modifications to recruitment incentive programs."

In addition to slowing hiring, Dotson said officials would be "examining all pending procurements to determine items or services that could potentially be delayed."

"Every unit is responsible for reviewing and eliminating any unnecessary spending," Dotson wrote. "The maintenance of strict budget controls is not just a financial requirement, but a shared responsibility."

"These actions are challenging, but necessary," Dotson added. The memo does not specifically identify products or services that might be slashed.

Freeze likely to strain beleaguered department

It's not clear what and how many positions will be impacted.

While it's not likely to directly exacerbate the vacancy rate for corrections officers, it could further strain other teams that are already stretched thin. VDOC's staffing analysis, conducted by GCL Companies, found that at least three state prisons had total vacancy rates as high as 50% —

a shortage that "impacts every aspect of facility operations."

At Nottoway Correctional Center, day shifts meant to be staffed by eight nurses sometimes operated with only two. As a result, inmates either did not receive medical attention, or else received it late.

That would be enough of a problem if employees were merely performing their own duties. But that's not the case, according to the staffing report: in many cases, "non-security staff are ... required" to do the work of corrections officers.

GCL Companies also reported unsupervised housing units and recreation yards, and significantly delayed responses to critical situations.

Gibson previously told The Times-Dispatch that staffing issues were common among corrections departments nationwide, and that, despite the challenges, VADOC remains "perhaps the safest corrections system in the United States."

THROUGH COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT VIRGINIA OFFICIALS PROMPT PRISONERS TO VIOLENTLY POLICE EACH OTHER (2025)

by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, October 4, 2025

If anyone needed further confirmation that Virginia's top officials can't be trusted to safely run the state's prisons, their recently created policy of collective punishment proves the case. The policy is not just dangerous, it's downright sinister.

At Va's notorious remote supermax prisons, Red Onion and Wallens Ridge, and their most updated version River North, entire cellblocks of prisoners - some 88 men or more - are now formally punished if just one person in the block breaks a rule. (1) At Red Onion and Wallens Ridge it has been written into the rulebooks that not only are privileges like visitation, video calls, canteen, and educational and religious programs taken for one person's alleged misconduct, but the units must 'earn' their lost privileges back.

Besides the basic unfairness of punishing innocent people for others' actions over which they have no control, with this policy officials are deliberately prompting prisoners to violently police or administrate the cellblocks FOR THEM. They know that punishing entire units of men if they don't keep each other in line is creating license and inciting the 'strongest' individuals and groups to terrorize everyone else. Which is the unspoken purpose of collective punishment in a prison.

What's more telling is it's being done in a prison system plagued by critical staff shortages, which has been a constant theme in the media for a year now.

I've written several articles exposing how for decades officials at Red Onion and Wallens Ridge in particular have not just created prison gangs and manipulated bloody wars between them that previously didn't exist at all, as a control mechanism and to create justification for the continued operations of these unneeded and expensive remote prisons, but also how they routinely use prisoners to carry out violent hits on those who officials dislike, can't control or who challenge them and their abuses. (2) This collective punishment policy formalizes these very practices.

Prison officials are astute at playing prisoners violently against each

other, and THIS is what underlies this new collective punishment policy coming from the top. Ask yourself: How else might men in the volatile prison environment control the behaviors of huge groups of other men who they don't know and who owe them no obedience except by fear and violence? And the MOST VIOLENT are the ones with the greatest ability to control whole units. Officials KNOW this. It is a deliberate administrative maneuver to have prisoners act as auxiliary guards and police the units for them. The SAME officials who forever spout rhetorical claims of "zero tolerance" for violent groups, group violence and so on.

If the obvious escapes you, just imagine if the cops did this in your community - if they incited the most violent groups on the streets to enforce 'order' for them. But people on the streets can defend themselves. Prisoners cannot.

Prisoners therefore have the right to be protected from harm. Over 30 years ago, in the case of *Farmer v. Brennan* (3), the U.S. Supreme Court established that prison officials must provide humane conditions of confinement. That the beating or stabbing of one prisoner by another serves no "legitimate penological objective."

In this context the court held that having stripped prisoners of the means of self protection, having confined them with people deemed dangerous, and having foreclosed their ability to enlist outside support, officials may not sit by idly and "let the state of nature take its course." Therefore, it established that the Eighth Amendment imposes a constitutional duty on prison officials to "protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners." What Va officials are doing, however, is the EXACT OPPOSITE. They are in fact inciting and giving license to prisoners to commit violence against each other. And the sinister catch-22 that they are knowingly creating is they are inciting this violence under circumstances where most victims can't seek their intervention or legal redress, as they could if they were beaten by guards.

In prison culture, prisoners are forbidden from informing staff when they become victims of threats or violence from other prisoners. To report this is to become a "snitch," which both besmirches their character and puts them in greater danger. To add insult to injury, those prisoners who willingly act out violence for officials are in fact acting as agents (in-house rules enforcers for officials), and are typically already informants themselves. These are the ones given privileged statuses and informal license by staff to break rules and receive contraband for controlling units for them.

These are dynamics of the prison environment that prisoners and officials know and understand well. Dynamics that I speak to in my newsletter "InsideOutsideUnity #2," where I discuss the common practice of prisoners informing by spreading misinformation and rumors for officials against other prisoners that officials dislike, fear or can't control. (4) And how this practice acts as a gateway for prisoners becoming full-on agents and policing other prisoners for them. This new policy of collective punishment formalizes this practice of using prisoners to violently police each other.

What Va officials are doing is neither new nor unique, and they KNOW IT is illegal.

In fact the most dangerous and inhumane U.S. prisons historically were those where officials used prisoner to police each other. Texas proved one of the most well-publicized cases, as a result of a decades-long class action lawsuit brought by the legendary prisoner activist, David Ruiz, titled *Ruiz v. Estelle*, where officials used inmates as guards under a

"Building Tender" system. (5)

The lawsuit exposed what the presiding judge, William Wayne Justice, found to be the most evil, corrupt and inhumane system of organized prison abuse he'd ever encountered. A system he devoted the remainder of his life to trying to change but in many ways failed due to the entrenched corruption of Texas prison officials.

In Texas the "Building Tender" system was justified by prison officials as needed to compensate for extreme staff shortages.

Va officials have now legitimized their long-standing practice of manipulating prisoner-on-prisoner violence, using the thin disguise of collective punishment - a tool of both control and continued abuse of men in its most remote and racially polarized prisons. (1) In this way their abuses continue by proxy, and in a way that they can claim plausible deniability for the resultant harm to prisoners, namely the injuries and deaths inflicted, and as in Texas, inmate informants and agents are being used as auxiliary guards to supplement for shortages in staffing. Yet another reason Va's top administrators, director Chadwick Dotson and operations chief Arnold David Robinson, must be fired and these unneeded, expensive, remote prisons Red Onion and Wallens Ridge closed down.

**Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!**

Endnotes:

1. In Va's most remote prisons, which are also its highest security prisons, such as Red Onion, Wallens Ridge, River North, Keen Mountain and Augusta, the staff who are drawn from local, rural segregated white communities of SW Va are nearly 100% white, while the prisoner populations are near-totally Black and Brown. As a result these prisons have always been notorious for racist abuses of their prisoners by staff. In fact, after a surprise tour of Red Onion during latter Dec 2024 in response to widespread media exposure of several prisoners setting fire to themselves in desperate response to abuses there, Va legislator Michale Jones issued a press release the next day identifying racist abuses of Black prisoners as one of numerous conditions that he stated needed immediate addressing at the prisons.
2. See for example, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "How Officials Manufactured Gangs and Gang Wars in Virginia's Prisons" (2024) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=3554>
3. *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825 (1994)
4. "InsideOutsideUnity #2" <http://rashidmod.com/?p=3754>
5. *Ruiz v. Estelle*, 503 F. Supp. 1265 (E.D. Tex. 1980)(pp. 1294-1298 cover the "Building Tender" system).

MEMORIALIZING A NEO-NAZI: THE COMMEMORATION OF CHARLIE KIRK (2025) BY KEVIN "RASHID" JOHNSON

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, October 4, 2025

For weeks now, the mainstream U.S. media has been awash with coverage and accolades about Charlie Kirk, a racist ultra-right young fascist who was shot to death on Sept 10, 2025.

In this era of MAGA glorification and promotion of traditional Nazi ideals, and shaming those who dare oppose them, Kirk is being hailed as a martyred

young hero of the mainstream Right, euphemistically called a "conservative activist" instead of the Neo-Nazi that he was.

There have been calls from modern conservatives for violent retaliation and repression of their political critics and opponents, whom they blame for creating the social climate that incited Kirk's killer.

Top U.S. officials attended and spoke at his memorial service, including president Donald Trump. He's being lionized as a hero of the Republicans, which reveals the true racist character of these U.S. power holders that they have hidden for decades behind a thin veil of 'tolerance'. Republican Virginia governor Glenn Younkin attended a gathering in memory of Kirk on Sept 25th where he expressed that Kirk left a "blueprint" for young conservatives to follow, and pledged \$100K to Kirk's Neo-Nazi Turning Point USA organization to set up chapters in Va.

Kirk was the sanitized political version of Dylann Roof, the young white loner who shot nine Black parishioners to death in 2015 during a Bible study class in Charleston, SC's Mother Emanuel Church. In Kirk was, and is now in death, FAR more dangerous than Roof, because his agenda was and is being used to revitalized a culture from not so long ago where the MAJORITY of white Amerika were people just like Dylann Roof. Where Amerika was a society where Blacks weren't just murdered in their churches and homes, but entire white communities routinely gathered to carry out festive gruesome murders (lynchings) of Blacks and distributed their body parts - with especial emphasis on genitalia - as mementos, and white mobs invaded and burned entire Black communities to the ground while gang raping Black girls and women and randomly killing Blacks. This is the history that MAGA proponents and the Charlie Kirks are driving a movement to erase and remove from schools and libraries, in furtherance of their agendas to revive this history. Indeed ,THIS is the very meaning of MAGA ("Make Amerika Great Again"). Meaning, bring back that old openly racist, sexist, white male supremacist Amerika, where no one except the dominant white male class had a voice and power, and openly repressed and murdered those who even breathed a whisper of defiance. This is the "great" Amerika they want to see "again."

The whole anti-DEI movement is blatant white male supremacy writ large. This is only a new euphemism (in times past they called it "Manifest Destiny" and "Mission Civilisatrice"), that allows it to be promoted openly and to attack its critics as racists - the typical dysfunctional defense mechanism of 'deflection' is now a conservative political strategy.

In this moment of heroizing the slain Neo-Nazi Kirk, not a word of criticism is being allowed to be uttered about him. Those who have simply posted or pointed to his own racist and sexist utterings and views have been fired from jobs, ridiculed in the press and social media, faced pressure from top power holders in the government, and have been used as heads on spikes dotting the landscape to warn others to keep quiet lest they suffer the same attacks for expressing free and honest speech.

Yet these conservatives claim that Kirk embodied the ideals of free and open political debate and expression and holding his views up against those of his opponents, so he should be emulated. His death is also being denounced by them as an evil act of political violence which they claim to oppose. Yet, they are openly repressing his critics. Wow!

One wonders then, why I am now sitting and suffering abuses in the SC prison system, including being held incommunicado, in the IMMEDIATE wake of and response to publishing articles exposing abuses in Va prisons and its high level administrators lying to the public to conceal those conditions?

Not only was my transfer to SC in retaliation for those articles and what is supposed to be protected free expression, but SC prison officials have retaliated each time I've written anything critical about them, and they've been trying to murder me by medical/dental neglect, refusing and delaying me treatment for an abscessed tooth for several months now, and lying to cover up their actions.

I've been a recognized political activist for decades, and was profiled as a domestic terrorist by federal and Va agencies in 2009, BECAUSE of their own statement that my written views and articles have often proven persuasive in educating the public and leading them to criticize the U.S. law enforcement and prison system, and "promoting a brotherhood of the oppressed philosophy."

So, a Neo-Nazi is a hero for espousing his views and challenging opponents, but I am designated a terrorist and face continued retaliation and censorship, including being targeted by the state with violence (political violence), for espousing my views, and simply reporting the truth about the abuses suffered by America's imprisoned and holding my UNIFYING political views up against the existing standards of the status quo, which has a tiny group of predatory rich exploiting everyone else. Clearly a racial and political double standard.

How many of our independent Black leaders have suffered political persecution and violence, and were murdered BY THE AMERIKAN GOVERNMENT for using their tongues? - Fred Hampton, George Jackson, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr, and the list goes on. NONE of them were memorialized as with Kirk, because they weren't white Nazis. In fact they were opponents of Nazism, and were murdered for challenging America's white racist capitalist status quo. Indeed, the formal commemoration of their memories many years after their deaths, which the MAGA movement is trying to erase today, were the results of Black folks fighting for decades to have them remembered.

In this period of the resurgence of open and unapologetic white supremacy and the Nazification of America, they must invent heroes like Kirk, shielding and hiding his deviant views, and pretending he was an innocent victim of some sinister killer. Kirk and his Turning Point USA group embodied, propagated and united to revive everything everything hateful that Amerika was built upon and has stood for (genocide, white male supremacy, sexism, lynching, slavery, racial mass imprisonment, capitalism and every form of divisiveness and discrimination devisable to target and playing them against each other), while trying to hide behind lies, red herrings and mudslinging.

This is the history of hate that the MAGA movement wants to erase while promoting a new generation of Neo-Nazis like Kirk and Turning Point USA.

We must expose them for what they are, fearlessly counter them, and stop their grabs for power.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!

LIBERATION POETRY

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE

by Melinda Evans, 2025

I may not hear your voice tomorrow,
As I sit through my infusion's sorrow.
But before the dawn slips quietly through,
I need you to know how much I love you.
You are my sunshine, my radiant ray,
A light in my heart every single day.
We stumble, we falter, we're only human,
But my love for you knows no undoing.
Despite your flaws, your stubborn pride,
I love every piece of you deep inside.
I miss you daily, your smile, your tone,
You're the reason my heartbeat carries on.
You are my fight, my unbroken song,
The reason I've learned to stay strong.
You are the well where my love runs deep,
The reason my soul its promises keeps.
If my words have ever caused you pain,
Please know it was love, not meant to strain.
I'm imperfect, but still you're my guide,
Perfect for me, my heart's greatest pride.
So hold these words when nights feel long,
You are my reason, my light, my song.
No bars can silence, no walls can sever,
A mother's love, it lasts forever.

DARE!

By William "StreetFighter" Tanner, Red Onion State Prison

I was once asked, why do I continue to fight when I know that there is no win? I would like to take a moment to tell you why...

Because I DARE!

I DARE to be who I am,
and,

I DARE to fight for what I believe is right.

I DARE to stand in the face of oppression,
and,

I DARE to resist against the arms of repression,
even when I know I'll be alone in the night.

I DARE because I believe that WE THE PEOPLE,
deserve BETTER!

and,

I DARE to stand strong in the worst of weather.
WHY?

Because...

I DARE!

I DARE!

I DARE!

I DARE to smile,
and,

I DARE to laugh.

I DARE to cry,
and,

I DARE to fear,
because I know that victory is near!

I DARE to rebel,
and,

I DARE to uproot,
all those fools who think I shall become moot,
because,

I DARE!

I DARE!

I DARE to love,
and,

I DARE to trust,
I DARE to defend and protect those that I must,

just,

because,

I DARE to CARE!

I DARE to push forward,
and,

I DARE to succeed,

because I know that I have everything I need.

But there is one thing that I DARE the most...

I DARE to ask YOU...

DO YOU DARE?

WE ARE OBLIVIOUS

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, November 10, 2025

We in strip clubs
Throwing ones
They at the range
Loading guns
We having dance offs
Booties twerking
They training hand-to-hand
Bodies working
We gouge on junk food
Overweight
They in gyms
Hitting weights
We in the hood
Chasing ghetto fame
They in the woods
Playing war games
With supply lines cut
We couldn't survive
They can live off the land
And thrive
As we go our merry way
Without a care
Nazi sentiment
On the rise everywhere
As the world around us
Grows deadly serious
We playing kid's games
Oblivious
Military brass being purged
Of women and Blacks
Jim Crow in the wings
Staging a comeback
National Guard and Marines
Mobilized
To invade every city
Of every size
Trained for urban combat
To rain hell like Gaza
Their sights trained on
Blacks and la Raza
Police forces expanding
With full immunity
The blue Klan with plans
Kill us with impunity
Missiles drones bombs
Are we ready for that?
Not shootouts but real war
Whole hoods laid flat
All the signs are telescoped
In preparation
We reclining laid back
Like we on vacation
We don't see what's coming
The stench on the wind
Tomorrow's enemies
Are today's friends

Power plots being hatched
All we know is marching
They want the globe
We want golden arches
Our vision limited
To small situations
The powers that be
Planning our extermination
This is the deal
With growing gentrification
With our living situation
More incarceration
The poor and homeless
Are being outlawed
Where else will we shelter
Caves and bogs?
Old style white supremacy
Is on the rise
Society paralyzed
With racial lies
A game of divide and rule
We don't realize
Played by the rich
We so idolize
Who falsely criminalize
Browns and Blacks disappeared
Mass roundups
People living in fear
Of ICE checkpoints
Jumpouts in ski masks
Civil rights being erased
Real fast
For some the signs of the times
Are very clear
Many say
This can't be happening here
Think not
You need a history lesson
This country was
Born and raised on the blessings
Of genocide slavery
Rape theft of land
They portrayed it as the burden
Of the white man
A so-called mission
To civilize every dark seed
Kipling called on whites
"Bring forth the best ye breed"
Once we were needed
To generate their wealth
That was the only reason
They cared about our health
Now we're seen as obstacles
A surplus population
That in their minds
Need extermination
So we're back to race hate
Groomed at the grassroots
More open than ever
Swastikas jackboots Nazi salutes

Remember Donald Trump's
Inauguration
Elon Musk gave the salute
To the entire nation
While we rapping singing dancing
And humming
They're preparing to win a war
We don't even see coming

THE GREATEST HEARTACHE (2025)*

By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, November 10, 2025

For the darker hue
It remains like slavery of olden days
At any moment
One's dearest could be
Sold away
Or their existence
Stole away
Heartache wrenched from smiles
On a day
Begun with sunshine
Defiled...
Each moment lived
Pregnant with fear
Will the next be mines
Whose life is likely
To be torn asunder
Whose child might be
Going under
The cold hard earth?
The very life one birthed...
How does one give adequate
Words or verse
To the loss
Of one's son or daughter?
How grievous the cost
Paid out of time, place and order
Stolen by a heartless thief
Pain that numbs
And defiles
Resentment that comes
From time together too brief
Words that express the deepest pain
Are all too mild
There is no grief
That compares
To the death of one's child

* Dedicated to my son Kwaivon Dejesus, who was gunned down on Oct 29, 2025 while attending a funeral in Richmond, Virginia, shortly after being released from prison.