News



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I wrote last week about prisoners' three-week strike for just treatment. So did Clare Coffey. The strike officially ended Sept. 9, but punishment of the strikers continues.

The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, a union for prison workers, published multiple updates during the strike. The committee links to reports about specific individuals (and cell blocks) that went on strike, and the subsequent retaliations from prison panels and guards — such as unfair hearings, solitary confinement, and removal of personal property. If one is locked up, one is vulnerable to just about any treatment.

The Incarcerated Workers newsletter provides phone numbers to prison officials and a script to help the caller make a clear complaint. When I've called, I've gotten denials and answering machines. It's even more frustrating than calling Congress to complain about children separated from their families. Then at least an aid promises to tell the boss.

Phil Berrigan spoke once at a Missouri protest of an execution, saying that treatment of prisoners is a taproot of justice. I remember him standing with us in a field outside the prison, when I make those phone calls that feels so fruitless. I am fertilizing a taproot of the tree of justice, doing my best work so that it will bear fruit.

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