

THE *Final Straw*

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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*2020 Uprising Prisoner
Malik Muhammad
Speaks from Snake River DC*

*The Final Straw Radio
August 18, 2025*

This week, we're sharing a recent interview with anarchist prisoner Malik Muhammad. Malik is 3 years into a 10 year concurrent federal and Oregon sentence for alleged use of molotov cocktails during the 2020 uprising and is currently incarcerated at the Snake River Detention Facility, in the hole.

We speak about Malik's politicization, their case, realities and organizing in the Oregon prison system, keeping connections with the outside, Malik's writing and inspiration. You can find more about their case and at malikspeaks.noblogs.org and you can find their support's mastodon at <https://kolektiva.social/@malikspeaks>.

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dystopian future that we are probably headed for, and it's just us resisting the state. It was really fun to write. My partner, Evan, who I love dearly, has been going over and transcribing it because he's also a writer, and he's helping me work out the kinks. I also have this idea of turning it into a graphic novel or a comic book, since I've taught myself to draw.

TFSR: You mentioned the dystopia that we're heading towards. In a recent post to your blog entitled "On the here and now, and trying," you talk about the ongoing slump deeper into fascism in this country. I know that there's a lot of scary, brutal, and terrible things happening right now, but I wonder what gives you hope, where you see breaks in the clouds, and what keeps you struggling?

Malik: What gives me hope are my siblings. I feel hope is a revolutionary responsibility and the anarchist's greatest weapon. It's the people — us — that give me hope. I make a distinction between we, the people, and us, the people. We, the people, that the Constitution is written for, that this country has been built for, is not us, the people. I try to stay away from using the word we in general, but us is the ones who give me hope. Whenever I get letters from strangers all over who become dedicated not just to talking to me, but to talking to other people and engaging with me. Right now, because I'm here with white supremacists and I have nobody to do Black August with me, I just, on a whim, had my partner make a post asking people. I started asking some of my siblings. I didn't expect anybody to say yes, and everyone said yes, even to the point where my sibling Lisa, out in New York, has a whole spreadsheet where people can access it online and log their hours and what they're doing. That gives me hope, because people are really engaging more with local prisoners. It shows that there is solidarity, there is strength there. I'm six hours away from anybody, and three people, who only knew each other on Signal, who had never met before, hopped in the car, drove six hours, and spent the night in a hotel to see me. This community and these networks are being built outside of Signal chats, and in real person and in reality want to come for a trip up here with other people. It's the people, it's us, that give me hope, because the isolation and everything that's going on definitely hurts. It makes it hard to stay steadfast and hardcore. People think I'm really brave, but it's really the people, it's other people that I draw strength and bravery and hope from.

TFSR: Malik, thank you so much for having this conversation and for reaching out. That's been really a pleasure. We should keep in touch.

Malik: Yeah, definitely. Thank you. This has been awesome.

my ideas out, and some people do go with a lot of my ideas. I had felt at this point, with mass deportations and ICE roundups, that with the large amount of normies actually being upset, I felt like this would be the route to getting them engaged in real, sustained prisoner solidarity, and getting them used to putting money on people's books and sending care packages, and getting them familiar with their prison and jail systems. Once they're rounded up, they are isolated and have no way to connect with their people. I've talked to a couple of groups that are actually doing stuff like this, and that makes me feel good.

But for the most part, I feel helpless and disconnected. Sometimes I'm like, "What else can I do besides write poetry about it or write a song?" When I'm in here, I try to talk about current events with people. Not in this hole, because in this hole, I'm just surrounded by nothing but white supremacists on my tier. I can't have any intelligible conversation with these individuals, but I try on main lines to have in-depth conversations and get people to understand the plight of the prisoner. The prisoner's plight is the plight of Gazans, of queers, of immigrants. It's all intertwined. It's all interwoven. There is no extrapolating it. Nothing happens in isolation or a vacuum. It's so hard in here to build community, so I really do have to hold on to my siblings, who I love and who care about me. I'm sorry if that doesn't answer your question, but for the most part, I feel pretty disconnected.

TFSR: No. That totally answers it. It was interesting to hear you navigating that isolation, that feeling of powerlessness, and being like, "Oh, actually, people are having letter writings and discussing and reading." Both those things can exist simultaneously. That's exactly what the state is doing, except for the part that we're doing. You had mentioned before, offhandedly, that you're working on a book. I don't know if you want to talk about that project.

Malik: Actually, it's two. I've got a book of poetry that I wrote my last year in the hole, and it's being transcribed to get to a publisher. The problem is my handwriting, it is horrible to read. Literally, my siblings are the only ones who can read it, so they're in groups right now transcribing my stuff to get published. So there is that and this hole's shot. I had two goals. I wanted to write a fiction novel, actually, I wanted to write four. I've got one done and three more in various phases of completion. And I wanted to teach myself to draw. I have taught myself to draw, which is pretty cool and super rad. I have this one novel done. I was inspired by Octavia Butler. I thought, I've got to write something. It features a lot of radicals: Eric King, Oso Blanco, Sean Swain, all of my siblings, and even my lawyer, C-Law, who I love dearly. I call it revolutionary fiction. It's called *Mr Dars*, and it's about a team of radical direct actionists who take radical direct actions against the state. It's set in a

Malik: All right. My name is Malik Farrad Muhammad. I am a queer, pan, and demi non-binary. I prefer they/them, at least right now, though, because of the masculine everything about me. I know that a lot of people are just using "him," so it doesn't really matter, but I prefer they/them pronouns. I'm 28, but my birthday is in February, which means I'm basically 29, which means I'm basically 30. I'm an anti-fascist, anarchist, a revolutionary, a writer of everything creative, poetry, music, drawing, and I'm a musician. I love to play guitar, and I love to sing.

TFSR: That's great. So you're basically 29, which means you're basically 30, so you're basically retired, right?

Malik: I'm basically retired. [laughing]

TFSR: Okay, happy upcoming birthday. Can you tell us a bit about your upbringing and how you came to be politicized?

Malik: I was born in Joliet, Illinois, and moved and lived pretty much all around Chicago as a kid. We were raised strictly Muslim. My father was a very mean individual. He left us very young, and we were poor. I guess, how I became politicized, I'd say I discovered anarchy on Tumblr. I was a Tumblr kid, but I think my earliest form of actual activism, was a walkout of my high school that I helped organize after Trayvon Martin's murder, and then not too long after that, I had one of many, but my own closest, deadliest run-ins with the Bolingbroke Police Department, and almost got killed by three police officers while fighting them.

I think that growing up poor, and being pretty much ostracized from a lot of my community, being Muslim, being Black, being poor... even my classes, even from elementary school, it was a fight with all of my teachers, because we moved literally every year. I would be in a new school, and I would get into fights with every new teacher about me not saying the Pledge of Allegiance, because we don't say the Pledge of Allegiance. And it reinforced this defiant mentality in me. So it was something that I expected every year, I was going to get into a fight with the teacher, every year they were going to lose the fight because I wasn't going to say the Pledge of Allegiance, but they'd be really mad at me, especially because a lot of my teachers were veterans, and a lot of them despised me because there was a lot of Islamophobia at that time. I think that's pretty much it, at least where my radical ideas come from.

TFSR: Yeah, it's really funny that in conversations in the last couple of months that I've had with folks getting their political background a little bit, or where they're just sharing when they start becoming an anarchist,

or critiquing what was being presented to you, or what rules to follow, or whatever. The Pledge of Allegiance is a really common pivot point for that. I remember being in third or fourth grade and being like, “Why am I saying this? Why am I including God in this? I don’t know if I believe in God.” And getting in trouble for it, and some friends getting forced to stand for it, but don’t have to say it. I don’t think that they made me, if I recall, actually stand for it. I just wasn’t allowed to say anything else during the pledge. Could you tell us about the time that you had those interactions with the police where you nearly died, that you mentioned, about how old were you, and what was your political development in the time up till the uprisings in 2020?

Malik: I think I was a freshman in high school at that time. It wasn’t too long before I dropped out. I believe I was a freshman at that time, and then my political development up until then- I tried really, really hard to be a ‘normie’, unfortunately, and that’s why I went the route of enlisting in the military. It was because my family were like, “Oh, you’re finally doing something with your life.” But everything that I was doing and living was counter to how I felt and believed. At the time I was married, I had a kid, and I was like ‘this is the best route I can go to take care of them.’ My political beliefs took a back burner. Though even when I was in the military, there was a considerable amount of time where my higher-ups thought that I was a conscientious objector because of my obstinacy to a lot of their rules, orders, and regulations. After I got out, my next semi-big thing was a Bernie or Bust protest I helped organize. Then I got really active in organizing in 2020.

TFSR: Were you in Indiana, Illinois, or Oregon at this point?

Malik: I started in Indiana. At the time, my second wife and I were living on six acres, practicing self-sufficiency, because I wanted to start a commune. That was my idea of how I could “rescue people from capitalism.” I really wanted to start a commune, but I grew up in a city, and I had no idea what country living was like. So this was my attempt.

I believe it was a week or so before George Floyd was murdered, and a kid named Dreasjon Reed in Indianapolis was shot dead by some pigs, and I was already irate about it. Then I saw the video of George Floyd, and I heard that “I can’t breathe” again. I remember the first time I heard it, I was like, “No, I would absolutely never let this happen again.” I was literally hearing it again, and it was so visceral, because that was a situation I was in, being choked to death and beaten by pigs. And I was like, “Oh, my God.” I knew that I needed to do something. I wanted to go out to Minneapolis and I had a few friends who were also ex-veterans who

perfect example of how it “can happen to anybody.”

TFSR: A lot of this has been about sustaining good connections, that prison is basically there to isolate and break people, break these connections. Between the Black August celebration/practice and people getting together and re-visioning their relationships and eating food together and doing study and doing workouts, or this blog project, I see these themes of keeping connections in spite of and as a means of resistance, which could lean towards other forms of resistance, which is great. But there are also writings on your blog about current events, about stuff going on on the outside that prison is meant to disconnect you from. Can you talk about staying involved in the movement on the outside and some more about the work of people who are in your support crew?

Malik: I don’t feel I’m involved enough. I wish I was out. But my people, I call them siblings, because “comrade” is really tanky and “brother” and “sister” is classic revolutionary, but it assumes gender, so I call people “sibling” and then insert their name. But my siblings, who I love dearly, do a lot to keep me informed. Also, NPR, I listen to over here. There is no news media that’s not right-wing and they do it on purpose inside these institutions, that’s all that they want you to have access to, is right-wing media. It helps browbeat people into this mentality that their circumstances are their own, and their treatment is okay. But NPR is different, I listen to NPR specifically, OPD, and stay in touch with things. And my support crew definitely tells me a lot of stuff that’s going on.

TFSR: Keeping up on media makes sense; that’s an important approach. But I was wondering if you want to speak any more about specific things that are helping you stay or feel connected to what’s going on outside, up to date, and you’re having an impact on your ideas getting out there.

Malik: I guess I don’t feel like I’m making much of an impact. Sometimes, though, I do get a lot of letters, and people tell me that they feel inspired by stuff they read on my blog. So maybe that is a thing, and maybe I don’t count it enough. In my head, I have real deal trauma response training and emergency first aid training, and with the Gazan genocide, I could literally be there and actually be helping. Personally, I feel more handicapped and helpless than ever, and it’s frustrating.

But when I do get letters from people who tell me that they’ve been inspired, or some of my siblings on the streets who do message me and I call them, and they tell me that they’re inspired by what they read on my blog and my steadfastness, it does give me some relief. I definitely feel involved then. I do put some of

you're technically not in the hole. They can technically house you wherever. Technically, they're supposed to put you on the main line or something like that until they decide what to do with you. But they just end up leaving you in the hole anyway. And then on top of that, where I'm at is IMU, the Intensive Management Unit. But they have BHU, which is the Behavioral Health Unit. They have ICH, which is Intensive Care Housing. And then they have MHI. I don't know what that is, but these are all the hole, it's the SHU by a different fucking three-letter name. But that's how they justify it to the state's watchdogs, like, "Hey, no, these people with mental health issues are not in the hole. They're in BHU." But it's the hole. It's the same thing. And those are almost worse, because those also have no time limit. It's indeterminate. You're there until they decide that you can leave.

TFSR: Yeah, I'm sure these circumstances and the oversight are not going to be improving anytime soon without massive social upheaval and pressure from the outside. So it's important, I think, for what you're saying and your criticism and your experience to be getting out into more ears.

Malik: Because, yeah, like you said, if the public just keeps thinking that it's not happening, nothing's going to happen. Even if we have movement on the inside, it's not going to be as strong unless we have the public with us.

TFSR: Yeah. I don't know how widespread it actually is; it might just be that I'm in a political bubble or whatever. But at least the term "abolitionism" still has and prisoner issues still have some resonance, even if the high tide mark was a few years ago for that discourse. If the messages attacking the statement that "it's bad people that are in these places and they deserve what they're getting," or that "it's not retributive and it's actually helping people be able to get back into society." If those two myths are on the way out, then just literally talking about what the conditions are and knowing that you or someone you care about could easily get put in that position can be a good motivator, hopefully.

Malik: Absolutely. That's one of the things I was telling my little brother. I tell a lot of people this too, because, as I said, Oregon has mandatory minimums, so even if you're a first-time offender, as I was... my little brother had a DUI once, and I was telling him, "If you got a DUI in Oregon, you accidentally hit somebody, bro, it wouldn't matter if the family came to the judge and said that they understood and they didn't want you to get a whole lot of time. You're going to prison for 10 years because it's mandatory minimums." It can happen to anybody. I think there was a movie on Netflix that came out a long time ago called *The Shot Caller*, which is a

got out and were out there organizing and doing some shit in Minneapolis. They were like, "Bro, the best thing you can do to help us is organize your city and keep organizing cities. I was like, "All right, cool." And that's what I did.

But anyway, in Indianapolis, I helped organize one of the largest protests that they had there, and like most, it turned pretty bad. I also did some organizing in Louisville. I spent some time in Chicago, and then I came out to Portland. I came out here because I had some people out here, and it was an amazing, immersive experience. Most of my time was spent helping organize and on the shield walls. Then, towards the end of 2020, is when the alleged incidents that I was arrested and charged for transpired.

TFSR: Can you talk about what you were alleged to have done and what you were convicted of and what sort of sentence you received?

Malik: It's alleged that, on a couple of occasions I manufactured Molotovs and threw them at lines of riot pigs, and a few of them caught on fire. I was convicted for four counts of attempted murder and two aggravated attempted murder, and then, it was 20 riot charges and criminal mischiefs. Also, because my case was really politicized, they dual-charged me in the feds as well. They charged me with civil disobedience, unlawful manufacturing of a destructive device, and unlawful use of a destructive device. The way they phrase it is so funny. Like, I didn't register my Molotov cocktails with the federal government and the ATF. And I'm like, "Oh, my bad." [laughs]

But so they dual charged me. And it's interesting, because the federal prosecution here told both my lawyers that the feds didn't want my case. They wanted to leave it in the state, but they decided to pick up the case because of being urged by Biden's Attorney General because around the time that they charged me is when the January 6 riots happened, and so the exact expression from him was that they wanted to appear as hard on left-wing extremists as they were on right-wing extremists. And so that's why I got charged twice, and had to plead guilty to both and I got a 10-year concurrent sentence, 10 years in the fed, 10 years in the state. And it's interesting, because now all those January 6 rioters are free.

TFSR: Yeah, I've heard that about what the Biden administration did with so many people in 2020. Like, there's an anti-fascist in upstate New York, Alex Stokes, and he saw people getting attacked in Buffalo at January 6 protest that he was participating in, and he used a knife to defend himself and a couple of people. It didn't cause deadly damage to people, it did stop them from attacking, it was two right wing paramedics who were Proud Boys. They went to the hospital, they had to go through physical therapy but they

were back at work after a couple of weeks or much. But he got 20 years for that. And it seems like this is the federal government showing that they'll go as hard against leftists as they will against Enrique Tarrio or whatever. So 10 years in fed, followed by 10 years in state, or they're running at the same time, concurrently?

Malik: Yeah, they're running at the same time. They run the sentence concurrently, thankfully, that'd be pretty fuckin' bad.

TFSR: And you've been in federal facilities. Are you just gonna go get ping ponged back and forth between federal and state facilities, or have you been in both?

Malik: When I was initially fighting my case, I was in the federal facilities and that's when they were doing the "typical diesel therapy" and shuttling me back and forth between federal. But because you do 85% your time in the Feds, and in the state, I got – because Oregon has mandatory minimums, and so I have to stay for daytime, which is insane. So, because the feds do 85% your time, my fed time runs out before my state time. So in my deal, I worked out that I just do all my time in the state. So I don't have to go from the feds to the state.

TFSR: How have you found conditions between the Oregon prison system and the Federal BOP? What have the facilities been like? What's the treatment by the guards like? Are there a lot of Nazi gangs? What's that been like?

Malik: Well, in the Oregon DOC, there are a lot more white gangs, whereas in the feds, there's pretty much the Aryan Brotherhood, and they don't allow other white gangs in the feds. I think AOB is one of the few white boy gangs that are allowed to be in the feds. Because what they do for white gangs when you get there is they explicitly tell you, "You have to either renounce that, or there's repercussions." Which is why it's also hard for white people who go to the feds to be independent, because if you're white, you run on white politics, unless you're a gang member like a blood ... that's prison politics. In Oregon's DOC, there are a lot more white gangs. You have IPS and Westside G and IAP, and there's a million, it's insane. It also stems from Portland, Oregon, which has a vast racist history all the way back to West or Eastside White Pride. They're neo-Nazi skinhead clicks.

As far as the pigs, they're the same. A pig is a pig is a pig. I would say that in Oregon's DOC, they have a lot less respect. There's just a general complacency amongst Oregon prisoners that I've found is much different than the feds. Within

their faces on top of a dude's body, kneeling on George Floyd's neck. These are the people that we're dealing with. And those dudes who came out in Oregon were on the CERT team. These people live to beat other people. The way that William Parker in the 60s recruited pigs from the Jim Crow South to go to LA to be part of his police force, because the white southerners so-called "knew how to handle Black folks." That's what they do. That's the people that they put on the CERT team and in the hole, people that "know how to handle Black folk." It's a pervasive system.

TFSR: When you're mentioning William Parker, I looked them up real quick. Did you catch that out of a book, or was that an article?

Malik: Yeah, no. Geo Maher, *A World Without Police*. I loved his book.

TFSR: Cool. I never actually cracked it because I'd read Kristian Williams' book a few years earlier, and I don't know why, I should definitely check that book out. There are copies around my house.

Malik: It's a good one. They stopped letting it in here. I was the last person who got one of these copies.

TFSR: One of the things that I've heard people talk about in Indiana and in the Ohio systems, and I just imagine that this is ubiquitous, is because of the lack of general health care, let alone mental health care, solitary is used as a punishment/"treatment" for people having mental health crises or acting out in ways that the administration would consider to be problematic behavior, or unmanageable. Is that a thing that you find frequently? What sparked the question is that you are talking about the person saying that they were going to kill themselves if they got sent back.

Malik: Yeah. They do that. If you come to the hole without a mental health problem, it's not possible for you to leave without some serious mental health issues. That kid, particularly, I didn't know him personally, but the people I know that knew him said that he was perfectly fine before his 200-some odd days in the hole under investigation. That's why the DRO, the Disabilities Rights group of Oregon, set and had a mandate that anybody with mental health conditions cannot be in the hole over 30 days. But the Oregon Department of Corrections still disobeys that because, like I said, they find workarounds.

They have this one workaround called MDT time, which is Multidisciplinary Treatment Team, where, once again, you're just in limbo waiting for them to figure out what to do with you. And what they say in that MDT time is that

Maybe five years ago, they changed the whole time from from 180 day max to 90 days, which isn't that drastic at all, especially when you think about the fact that you can get taken to the hole, and you can get maxed out at 90 days for your segregation sentence. Then they can do what's called a P5, pending category 5, which is your custody level, which means you can't be on a main line, which means they're considering you for IMU. So you can be in Pending 5 status for up to another 180 days. Before they then hard 5 you, and then actually send you to IMU for a minimum of 180 days. Their system is so ridiculous, and they find so many different ways around it. Investigations can keep you in the hole for 180 days, like I said, without even a charge. Then even when you're in IMU, that 180-day minimum can go up to 36 months and indefinite if they just "don't know what to do" with you. All they have to do is reconvene once a month and say that we're still trying to figure out what to do with you. In the meantime, you're going to still be sitting in the fucking hole.

People sit for years. The Norteños, they do that to them all the time. The worst is that they keep them in the hole for years for no reason, and because there's no public outcry about it, and there's no unity inside against it, they are able to get away with it. And then they can do things like, if they know who you are, they know who your enemy is, they can let you out of the hole, if they feel they have no other way to deal with you, let you out of the hole in a spot where they know that you're going to get into a fight, just so that you come back to the hole. And they can restart their time all over again. There was a kid who just recently killed himself last year at OSCI because he was in the hole for 230-some odd days under investigation, and he got let out. He was out for a month, and they took him right back under investigation again, and he begged them not to take him back. He said, "If you take me back, I'm gonna kill myself." And he, sure enough, killed himself because they didn't care.

That's just one of a string of suicides that have happened at OSP and OSCI because of these ridiculous, long hole times. And the way that they can treat you in the hole when it comes to their cell extraction teams, or search teams, crisis response teams. They come in masked up, steel toed boots, and they beat the shit out of you. That's what they do. When they take you to the hole, at least in Two Rivers and FRCI, where I'm at, there's no camera in the change out room where they take you, and if you piss them off enough they'll take you right there where you're off camera, and they'll beat the shit out of you there before they take you to the hole, and then you go to the infirmary. And because you're going to IMU, this entire time, you don't have any contact with anybody. So by the time you are healed up and you can talk to anybody, all of the "evidence" is gone, and they can get away with whatever they want. Just recently, it came out in the Oregonian that there was a string of COs that were sharing around racist shit, COs photo shopping

the feds, a hunger strike or riot, these were things that we were doing, and it was a hard line that we were pushing. In Oregon's DOC, it's really passive, and it seems to be really hard to get prisoners to organize, as opposed to in the feds.

But in general, I would also say the feds have newer facilities compared to Oregon's, because I spent most of my first five years at OSP, which is Oregon's oldest prison. It's so run down and dilapidated, they pay exuberant fines every year because all of the cells are one-man cells that they stick two people in instead of increasing the cell count to make more cells, they just keep paying millions of dollars in fines every year. There's no AC, and the cells are sheet metal. So when you're in there in the summer, it's like you're in an oven. They took the fans away. They won't allow you to buy fans anymore. You're just sweltering. It's horrible. It's miserable. The facilities are terrible. The food is shitty.

My biggest qualms are their religious discrimination when it comes to Muslims, and our Eid meals and our fasting for Ramadan. It seems they seem to explicitly go out of their way to make us miserable. Because during Ramadan, you fast, and they bring us sack lunches after the sun goes down, and sometimes you'll get just some bread. Sometimes you'll get bread, an egg, and an apple. It's not even the necessary requisite calories per day, which is entirely different than the feds. In the feds, you get your Eid meal. You get actual food. Like I said, the pigs in Oregon's DOC are just incredibly, immensely disrespectful, more so than the feds. Like I said, I think it has to do with the complacency of the general inmates.

TFSR: So you mentioned that organizing behind bars in Oregon prisons is very difficult. Can you talk about your experience with it? I read about a successful hunger strike to increase prisoner free time from 30 minutes to four hours. I guess this was FCI Sheridan, so this is a federal facility that you'd participated in. But I wonder how interested prisoners are in making common demands when lines are drawn by sets or by cars or whatever, and when those lines can get crossed for common action.

Malik: At Sheridan, it was a common push. And like I said, that's something that seems to be lacking here. It seems like the desire to improve the conditions is almost nonexistent. Even when it comes to outside, actual lawyers and groups like the DRO coming to ask questions about the conditions that people are suffering, people are hesitant to even talk to them or explain what it is they're going through. I think a huge portion of it comes from, specifically, the white car because they enjoy more privilege under the oppression, and it's apparent, and it's not something that they seek to give up. I think the real prisoner's dilemma that whites who enjoy more privilege under this repression, just refuse to relinquish their privilege. That's a dual-fold thing that I feel is a major impediment.

Allegedly, there was a strike that was being organized by somebody in a different unit, and it was because all of the Blacks in this unit, the Sureños, and the Paisas were not getting tablets. Only the white dudes were being given tablets. Even when we would sign up, we just weren't getting them. And when it was pointed out that the reason that the white boys don't want to do this strike with us is because they are the only ones getting the tablet, and so does not bother them, that seemed to be the only thing that spurred them to be like, "Oh no, I am not a cop lover or whatever." And then they seemed to want to get on board, but up until you explicitly called them out for enjoying their privilege, they're not on board for shit.

I was having a conversation with one of these other- Well, he was an independent white dude, I don't usually fuck with the white gang members, but this independent white dude was talking to me, and I was trying to get him to fill out this paperwork for an organization that was looking into hole issues. He was like, "I don't know if I want to go into everything." And I was like, "Why not?" And he's like, "Well, because you see those TVs on the wall," because in IMU, there are four TVs on the wall that are pointed to the cells that people can tune into on their radios. And he's like, "Those TVs are privilege. They don't have to do this." I was like, "Fuck the TVs, what do you mean they don't have to? This is less than the bare minimum. Bro, who gives a fuck about these TVs?"

So, on the one hand, there's been that issue, the whites who refuse to relinquish any of their privilege. And then on the other hand, there's the alleged situation that I'm in the hole for right now, organizing a strike on main lines, where the Oregon prisoners' mentalities seems to be so browbeaten that even the slightest improvement to conditions just seems impossible. Asking for shorts, being able to just wear your shorts instead of pants and everything...it was like, "Well, why would they let us do that?" And I'm just like, "Well, why not what?" There was one dude, when I told him, "You should ask for streaming services if that's what you want." He's like, "I don't know if they do that." I was like "Why not? Just fucking see if they'll do it, who cares?" And then he came back to me later, and he was like, "If they gave us streaming services, I'd never leave my cell." And I was like, "You're missing the point. You're missing the point of collective action. The allotments, and the trinkets aren't what we're doing this for." It seems like the petty allotments and treatment and trinkets that people have now, they're just so clung to that they don't want to relinquish them. It's the same thing as on the streets, because the streets are just the macro, the micro is prison. Everybody has their allotments and their trinkets and their pastimes, their distractions that get them through the day. We have the same things here. And some people are just more acutely aware of it and don't give a fuck as opposed to others. It just seems really bad in Oregon's prisons, where they just don't want to- I dunno, I think the huge portion of it is the fact that they can put you in the hole for so long. It does wear on people. I spent all of

of states are cutting it down. Of course, they find ways around it. But even California, they've cut their hole time down to ten days. Ten days is their max in the hole. So it's possible. Even the Oregon Youth Association, the juvie for Oregon doesn't do hole time anymore at all. It's just Oregon's DOC that hasn't caught up, because this is just what they do. I felt like using my blog to post stuff to get people to write people and talk to them about their situations, and also my form of activism at the time. But then, eventually, I was like, "Fuck it, I'm going all full throttle again." And that's when all the other shit started.

TFSR: For the folks that are on the outside, who maybe will end up in prison, or maybe just need to have a better understanding, it seems at the same time as you were using the opportunity to learn about people's situations and also creating an archive to help other folks understand and hear these stories, which, as someone who does a media project, I think that's pretty important. It's a really cool project.

Malik: Thank you. I think it's just my militancy. I feel like if I'm not doing all that I can, my mentality has always been like, "What's the point of giving if you're not giving your all?" I am able-bodied. I can do all of these things. It's actually my sibling Chris, who does a whole lot for me. I love him dearly. And he was the one who was telling me, like, "Man, you can attack this in a different way." He explained a different way than I can't go into right now, but I was like, "Oh, actually, that's still being active, and it's not compromising yourself." So it is important. I didn't realize how important it was at the time. I just went back to like, "I'm willing to fight these pigs, I'm willing to go on hunger strikes."

TFSR: You mentioned somebody who had spent a decade in the hole, and how people have been able to push back in other states to limit the amount of segregation time. Or there have been successful prisoner and inside-outside solidarity movements to get that. What gets you sent to the hole in the Oregon system? What recourse do you have as someone who gets sent there? How can you challenge that? And how long can you stay in there?

Malik: All right, so in Oregon, pretty much anything can get you taken to the hole. You can be swept up under "investigation" and be in the hole for up to 180 days without even a charge, it's pop. When I got swept up this time, I was under investigation without a charge. They don't tell you, but that's how you know, when you don't have a DR, you're under investigation. If they just swooped you up, cuffed you, and took you to the box. But it can be anything. Their rules and regulations are so lax when it comes to what they can do and how long they can be in here.

why you're using your access to folks on the outside to interview fellow prisoners, and what experiences you've had with this project?

Malik: I started that when I first got to prison, because I had met a whole bunch of dudes who had done a whole lot of hole time, and they were just in and out of the hole. Some of them were over it, and now they were to the point where they were working within the administration, and these were the older heads who were trying to steer me away from doing what they considered nonsensical stuff. Because they considered working within the administration to be a better route, because they have done years of fighting and other shit. I started to buy into it, but because of my nature, I wanted to figure out some way to do something. There was a class I was taking, I think it was on recidivism. There was a dude in the class, he's been in prison for 20-some odd years, and he was about to get out, and he had done thole time in and out, and he was talking about how he's always prepared to go to the hole. He pulled out this wad of envelopes, address books, and pens. He's like, "Yeah, dude, I'm always ready to go to the hole because I'm probably gonna go. It's like knowing that when I get out, I'm probably gonna come back to prison." I was like, "Sounds like a form of institutionalization." He's like, "Yeah, yeah, except seg." Then we came up with the word segstitutionalization.

He was actually the first to do that interview, Andy. And I was like, "Oh, can I ask you?" I really just was curious. And then I was like, "Well, maybe I should tell people, because people talk about institutionalization. So maybe people would want to learn about and talk about the form of institutionalization that you get inside a prison." Because the hole is so viscerally like going to prison again. Because you are, you get re-arrested, you get handcuffed, you get beaten up, you get taken, and you get secluded, you have nothing, you have no contact. It's literally getting arrested all over again. It's literally going to prison all over again. And it's a whole process. There becomes this mentality. And so everybody that I interviewed, it kept coming up that they were always prepared. Now I'm the same way. I always walk around with at least five or six envelopes, because you won't have contact when you first get in. So you want to be able to mail people and be like, "Hey, I'm in the hole." And so I walk around with my address book too, because you don't remember everybody's address and phone numbers. So you keep your address books, you keep envelopes, you keep pens, you make sure people know, like, "Hey, probably going to go back, not that I'm complaining, but it's possible." It's a ridiculous sense of recidivism.

At that time, I was like, "Maybe this is a way that I can be active and expose." Because I really wanted to expose Oregon's abuse of hole times. That was my biggest thing. And it still is. That's what I want to expose, and I want to change because it's crazy. Don't get me wrong, a lot of states have crazy hole times, but a lot

last year in the hole, and right now it's eight months this year, and I won't be getting out till October, so it's 10 months, and it does get wearing. But I don't know, for a just reason, a just cause, it's worth it. Some people have been in this long-term, for like 10 years. And it's just this same bullshit that Cali faced before with their indeterminate seg sentences. I think that's one of the biggest scares.

TFSR: The ones that led to the massive cross-organization hunger strikes and such. That spread into Canada and up into other parts of the US, too, right?

Malik: Yeah, it was a massive movement. And Cali is so good with that. With their organizing, with their militancy, and I think a lot of it should be attributed to George Jackson. I will say that not just because it is Black August, but because I think a lot of it is attributed to George Jackson. Their militancy is something else. When they strike, it's not just one facility, it's every facility is going. There's two dudes here on this main line who allegedly, may have been trying to organize this with me, and they're from Cali, and they were in those strikes, and they said that the pigs were coming around with bags from McDonald's to people's cells dangling in front of them, and people would take those bags and throw them off the fucking tier. That's the mentality that you're supposed to have. But here, these people would eat the McDonald's.

TFSR: That's torture just smelling it. I didn't ask the question about this, but since you brought it up, can you talk about your Black August practice? Maybe say a little bit for the audience who may not know about Black August, the heritage of it, how it's practiced in Oregon prisons, and how you observe it yourself?

Malik: Black August is in remembrance of George Jackson. I also say in remembrance of Jonathan Jackson, because he was equally as radical, and I love him dearly. He and his brother left imprints on society. It is observed, at least at OSP. When I came to Snake River, I didn't realize nobody knew what Black August was. They don't observe it. But every Black August for all 31 days, you're supposed to get together in groups with the Blacks and work out. We do 100 of some reps every day. Most of the time, it's burpees. You get in as many groups as the pigs will allow you to before they make you break up, and you do your 100 burpees. It's about being physically and mentally fit for preparedness for physical conflict with the pigs, but also with white racist gangs.

During his time in the California penal system, George Jackson was sentenced to an indeterminate sentence, one year to life for an \$80 petty robbery

charge. The guards were putting glass shards in our food. They were chaining us at tables and letting white supremacists stab us and everything. Because the Black car was not an actual Black car at that time in California, because there's a lot of infighting and everything, and obviously, there's just so much systemic racism, that it seems insurmountable. George Jackson brought that militancy, that steadfastness, that I was like, "Okay, I don't care. Whatever neighborhood you are from as a crip, you are a crip and you're Black, whatever neighborhood you are from as a blood, you are blood and you are Black." And that's how UBN, United Blood Nation, started. The Blacks became a Black car and very militant, and they were ready to and did actually fight against the pigs and white racist, white supremacist groups.

After his murder and assassination by the state, it just became a thing every August, for all 31 days, we work out together, because there's always stoked division between us. And for one month, we come together. Personally, it's annoying to me. There's just one month, but at OSP, every month we would get together. I probably get 1000s of burpees because I would go from group to group, because what it's also about is solidarity. It's not just about being so physically fit. The way that my friend used to say it is, it's not about what you can do, but about what we can do together. I can do 200 burpees myself, but this brother over here may not; he may struggle. He may need encouragement. So I'll do 100 burpees with this group. Do 100 burpees with this group. Do 100 burpees with this brother who was doing something else, and now he's by himself, or a mile run. Just a 100 of something to stay physically fit and mentally fit and show solidarity. At the end, at least at OSP, we do a big spread together, we make a whole bunch of food together. We try to preach unity, and we always say it shouldn't be Black August, it's one month. It should be Black August every day of the year; we should all be unified. But, like I said, there's this caliber, this mentality in Oregon's prison, so it becomes in one ear out the other, and people just let it go after Black August is over.

TFSR: That's hard, but you do have a whole system that has spent, like, people getting paid studying how to divide communities and how to oppress.

Malik: Yeah. I definitely agree with that. I think if there was more of an in-your-face existential threat, The pigs are in your face with their racism, and they are in your face with their violence and their heinousness. I think the It Did Happen Here podcast commented on it before that Portland's racism was just accepted for a while. And for some reason, it's like trauma transfers. People just accept that "okay, yeah, these pigs are going to be racist. They're going to be violent towards me, who cares?" Well, you should care. I think maybe if it was blatant in your face, like the 60s, or you're getting glass shards in our food, people would want to do something else.

TFSR: I read that you're a parent. Can you speak a little about sustaining relationships during your incarceration, and maybe some lessons that you've learned about from what must be a very difficult road so far? Have you been able to lean on the experience of other folks who are imprisoned with you?

Malik: Yeah, it is a difficult road, a difficult thing to do. My son actually turns 10 next month, and I'm going to miss another birthday, and it's been hard. He is used to me being gone because of the military, but this is something different, because his mother is in a bad situation with her boyfriend. I can tell when I talk to him, though, he's as loving and resolute as I am. Last year, when I was in the hole for the entire year, I hadn't talked to him for so long. When I finally got him on the phone, I did so much apologizing, and I was in tears, and he was like, "It's okay, Dad. I understand." I know he doesn't understand, or maybe he does. He has a smart kid. It's the loving way that he just accepted. Because I always tell him, like, "As a man, you have to stand on your own two feet." So even when I told him and apologized, I told him, "I had to do what I had to do." And he was like, "I get it." Maybe he does, because he's smart.

A lot of what people have told me in here is just don't stop trying. And there have been times where I have wanted to stop, because I'm just like, "Maybe he is probably better off not being fucked up by me." So a lot of me has been like, "fuck it, leave it alone." But all of the older heads who also have kids or who have constantly been in and out, they're just like, "Don't stop trying." When his mother doesn't let me talk to him, which isn't her, it's her boyfriend, they're like, "Write, just keep writing and don't stop writing. Even if he doesn't get it, you can save it for him, and so he'll know that you were thinking about him." That's why I write a lot of poetry about him and stuff, and I post it on the blog, and I write in my journal about him every day. I write songs and poetry about him so I can show him, like, "There's never been a day that I didn't think about you. Trust me." His pictures are on my wall right now from his last birthday that I missed, and it certainly it saves me and helps get me through the time. It's certainly hard to maintain any sort of interpersonal relationships, especially doing so much [audio cuts out]. But one of the things that I have found rings true is that the people are supposed to be there, the people who know, the people who understand, are going to be there. I have some amazing people in my life, and they also help me maintain my contact with my son.

TFSR: As you mentioned, your blog, a number of pieces you've written have been published alongside updates on your situation that malikspeaks.noblogs.org, there I found a series called segstitutionalization. That's really hard to say, it's a long word. Can you talk about segstitutionalization and