

Monday, February 20, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Occupy 4 Prisoners! National Occupy Day in Support of Prisoners!

WHEN: February 20, 2012, 5:00-6:30pm

WHERE: March from Jackson & LaSalle at 5:15pm to the Metropolitan Correctional Center (Clark & Van Buren), with rally to follow.

CONTACT: Brit Schulte, Chicago coalition press liaison (brit@nodeathpenalty.org) 254.681.5973

Occupy Chicago, in collaboration with over 28 local community and national organizations, is mobilizing for **The National Occupy Day in Support of Prisoners: Occupy4Prisoners**. This action is part of a national call initiated by California death row prisoner Kevin Cooper. This demonstration is in solidarity with those behind prison walls, their loved ones, and formerly incarcerated people.

Prisoners are part of the 99%.

The prison system is the most visible example of policies of punitive containment of the most marginalized and oppressed in our society. Prior to incarceration, 2/3 of all prisoners lived in conditions of economic hardship, while the perpetrators of white-collar crime largely go free.

We demand an end to mass incarceration, which has had a devastating effect on communities in Chicago and around the country. For example, in Chicago, 55 percent of black males are labeled felons for life, and, as a result, may be prevented from voting and accessing public housing, student loans, and other public assistance.

We will meet at 5 pm at the Chicago Board of Trade to call out the racist system that puts profits over people and prioritizes prisons over education, quality mental healthcare, drug treatment, after-school programs, and other vital services. At 5:15 we will march to the Metropolitan Correctional Center to show solidarity with those who are behind bars. We will let the 1% know that we have not forgotten about the 2.3 million people whom they aim to make invisible.

What we are calling for:

1. Abolishing unjust sentences, such as the death penalty, life without the possibility of parole, Three Strikes, juvenile life without parole, and the practice of trying children as adults.
2. Standing in solidarity with movements initiated by prisoners and taking action to support prisoner demands, including the Georgia Prison Strike and the Pelican Bay/California Prisoners Hunger Strikes.
3. Freeing all U.S.-held political prisoners.
4. Demanding an end to the repression of activists, specifically the targeting of African Americans and those with histories of incarceration, and many others being falsely charged after only exercising their First Amendment rights.
5. Demanding an end to systematic disenfranchisement by selective enforcement of the law on certain populations such as people of color, gender non-conforming individuals, people with disabilities (mental and physical) and those advocating for them.
6. Demanding an end to the brutality of the current system, including the torture of those who have lived for many years in Secured Housing Units (SHUs) or in solitary confinement. As well as putting an end to profiteering off of prison slave labor.
7. Demanding that our tax money spent on isolating, harming and killing prisoners, instead be invested in improving the quality of life for all and be spent on education, housing, health care, mental health care and other human services which contribute to the public good. As well as putting an end to the school-to-prison pipeline.

For more information and a full list of endorsing organizations and individuals, please contact Brit Schulte (brit@nodeathpenalty.org) or visit occupy4prisoners.org. In addition to the website, there is also a Twitter (@occupy4prisoner) and a Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/108536135937759/>