

New Book: Beneath the Mountain. An Anti-Prison Reader. “The Impact of State Terror, the Role of Prisons in Maintaining Social Hierarchy”

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[Beneath the Mountain: An Anti-Prison Reader](#) (City Lights, 2024) is a collection of revolutionary essays providing a vital core of primary texts and insurgent writings by US dissidents and revolutionaries who experienced state terror and incarceration firsthand.

Documenting the struggle, beginning with slavery, genocide, and colonization, up to our present day, it imagines a collective, anti-carceral future and centers the experiences and wisdom of those who have lived, and sometimes died, “beneath the mountain.”

These essays point towards the impact of state terror, the role of prisons in maintaining social hierarchy, and how we should build and organize to disrupt the status quo. Beneath the Mountain honors the voices of those too often left out of the public discourse and suggests that their insights, when studied and applied, foster emancipatory consciousness.

Accomplishing such an ambitious project with an incarcerated person is both challenging and humbling all at once. We couldn’t quickly email each other back and forth, or pick up the phone and call when we needed to confer, solve a problem, or ask a question. Working together required a different approach. For example, we developed the Table of Contents while hanging out in the prison visiting room munching on chips, surprisingly fresh mediterranean salad from the vending machine, and a shared chocolate bar.

“Leonard.” Mumia proposed decisively. “Leonard must go in the book.” Of course, I agreed. Leonard Peltier, a native elder and member of the American Indian Movement, who has served 47 years after being unjustly incarcerated, was his very first suggestion. More followed in rapid succession. It wasn’t hard to decide who to put in Beneath the Mountain; the overwhelming challenge was that there was not space for everyone we wanted to include.

Written by the prisoner class, the most structurally dispossessed people on earth, their emancipatory vision inspires the work being done today in the streets, cages, and classrooms. It’s a vision centered on revolutionary love, hope, and solidarity as antidotes to state violence and control. Who better to tell these stories than those who have lived them?

Excerpt from the book:

“Revolutionary love speaks to the ways we protect, respect, and empower each other while standing up to state terror. Its presence is affirmed through these texts as a

necessary component to help chase away fear and to encourage the solidarity and unity essential for organizing in dangerous times and places. Its absence portends tragedy. Revolutionary love does not stop the state from wanting to kill us, nor is it effective without strategy and tactics, but it is the might that fuels us to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with others regardless. Perhaps it can move mountains.” —Jennifer Black & Mumia Abu-Jamal from the introduction to [Beneath The Mountain: An Anti Prison Reader](#)

Many of these essays have been studied throughout the years by generations of revolutionaries. Curated here, along with significant contributions of newly published material, this book is for everyone, inside or outside of prison, interested in developing an anti-carceral, liberatory consciousness. It's for all of us, but it might be especially useful for independent scholars such as those in prison who don't have access to the internet, universities, or public libraries. Inspired by the incarcerated radical tradition, we are sending this book to every Prison Radio Correspondent. Thanks to your early support, we have already sent over 20 books into prisons. Please help us send one to every prison in the country! If you are able, we ask that you buy a copy for yourself, and an extra copy so that we can send it inside. May a new generation of leaders be inspired by the arc of anti-prison thought and action!

Finally, this book would not be possible without the sustained effort of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a consummate journalist, writer, activist, revolutionary, and trained academic. In the face of staggering hurdles, he continues to do what he does best: act as a conduit for those who have been silenced. His consistency, commitment, discipline, and tenacity is unparalleled and he remains the “Voice of the Voiceless.” He is a gift to the world and his influence and impact will be felt for a thousand generations.

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Beneath The Mountain: An Anti Prison Reader edited by Mumia Abu-Jamal & Jennifer Black (City Lights 2024)

Beneath The Mountain: An Anti-Prison Reader (City Lights, 2024) is a collection of revolutionary essays, written by those who have been detained inside prison walls. Composed by the most structurally dispossessed people on earth, the prisoner class, these words illuminate the steps towards freedom.

Beneath the Mountain documents the struggle — beginning with slavery, genocide, and colonization up to our present day — and imagines a collective, anti-carceral future. These essays were handwritten first on scraps of paper, magazine covers, envelopes, toilet paper, or pages of bibles, scratched down with contraband pencils or the stubby cartridge of a ball-point pen; kites, careworn, copied and shared across tiers and now preserved in this collection for this and future generations. If they were dropped in the prison-controlled mail they were cloaked in prayers, navigating censorship and dustbins. They were very often smuggled out. These words mark resistance, fierce clarity, and speak to the hope of building the world we all deserve to live in.

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