

MUTUAL AID MONTHLY

A Production of Des Moines Mutual Aid

June 2024



Iowa State Penitentiary Tortures Prisoners *Sick system uses solitary, chemical restraints.*

Comrade Pat

Terrance Sayles is not an extraordinary inmate at Iowa State Penitentiary (ISP). He enjoys listening to music, reading, and walks outside. He talks to his mother on the phone every week.

There are darker aspects to his incarceration which are also all too ordinary. Along with thousands of other incarcerated people, the state has ‘enrolled’ him in what they term the “Long Term Restrictive Housing Program”, in which he is confined to a single cell for 23 hours per day, indefinitely.

There is another term for this sort of treatment: *solitary confinement*. Solitary confinement is known to the United Nations and every person with a beating heart to be nothing less than torture.

The state has not diagnosed Terrance with any mental health condition to his family’s knowledge, but has nevertheless put him on a drug cocktail which keeps him sedated and barely conscious most of the day. These are chemical restraints used against someone who cannot refuse them.

ISP officials also refuse to share medical information with his family, despite the fact that he has signed a release form for his mother.

Thousands of other incarcerated people suffer under the same penal system. Terrance’s case highlights the fact that the prisons are not intended to render justice but instead to violently control populations which capital considers surplus. Justice cannot exist in a state where people like Terrance are tortured and drugged behind ISP’s walls.

Grass is Counter Revolutionary

What I planted this year.

MF Rose

I diligently decided to plant grass seed and maintain it until it was established. To have grass to mow? No, commercial grass seed has been developed to grow quickly and easily in many settings and long grass roots break up compacted soil. Over the years I’ve pulled the unwanted and invasive plants while encouraging native plants that graciously take space in the yard.

I threw down some straw to retain moisture where the grass didn’t grow. Past years of drought and foot traffic had left too much bare dirt which leads to erosion, loss of topsoil and nutrients, and a muddy mess when it rains. I then broke up some of my comfrey roots and tucked them in and tossed seeds on top. The leaves of comfrey add many nutrients to the soil.

I included beans and peas that will pull nitrogen from the atmosphere and return it to the soil, helping plants grow. Nitrogen in the atmosphere contributes to climate change, so grow more beans! The grass is now already overrun by goldenrod, asters, coneflowers, clover, plantain, and lamb’s quarters (as tasty as spinach and more nutritious).

No Mow May? How about No Mow Ever. After all the insects have established their colonies, it’s just cruel and defeats the purpose. Why have grass over food, medicine, and an ecosystem that supports pollinators and wildlife?

No access to a yard? Try guerilla gardening and plant sunflowers. They are phytoremediators, with the ability to remove heavy metals and radiation from soil. Fill your pocket with seeds and guerilla garden around town.



Workplace Organizing Training Held by Iowa IWW

Direct collective action gets the goods.

Comrade Jordan

The Iowa branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) hosted an organizer training for fellow workers across Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois in May. The trainers prepared workers to organize their workplaces and to support others to do the same. This included building relevant skills: collecting and coordinating relevant information, building organizing committees, having one-on-one conversations with fellow workers, navigating labor laws, and carrying out direct actions.

Traditional business and trade unions in the US have leadership structures that negotiate with the employer on the rate of pay for labor power. Some union leaderships are more or less willing to engage with strikes, but all start and end at the table with bosses. This also puts the unions in competition with other workers. This does not discount the solidarity and strength of union members, but it is a fundamental weakness of the organizational structure.

The solidarity unionism model promoted and used by the IWW aims much higher than traditional trade unions. This model creates worker organizations that are independent from the bosses and able to act directly on the will of the workers. These organizations are united with each other in “one big union” by fundamental caring and solidarity with all of the working class. The IWW seeks to use this model to organize all workers for everyday struggle with the employer class and for overthrow of that class.



Any reader who would like to organize for better control over their working conditions or would just like more information about the possibility can contact the Iowa Branch at central.iowa@iww.org.

Thanks to our trainers, Fellow Workers from the Milwaukee branch!

This flyer is a production of Des Moines Mutual Aid, which is a local network of anarchists, communists, and socialists building community autonomy from capitalism and the state. Below are our points of unity - basically, the political and social outlook which binds us together.

o. We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1. We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people’s needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2. We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don’t rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3. We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people’s lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4. We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

If you want to get involved, let a collective member know. For more information, including how to donate, visit iowamutualaid.org.