



# Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

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## Overt Political Oppression

BY COMRADE JORDAN

On July 4th, 2025, a protest took place at the US concentration camp in Alvarado, Texas. The state's case alleges vandalism, setting off fireworks, wearing black clothing, and one individual shooting and injuring one pig.

The state responded by attempting to lock anyone remotely associated with the protest away for the rest of their lives. The state has used the nebulous term of terrorism to bypass its supposed constitutional and human rights obligations for decades. This case is the latest example. Seven non-violent protestors have now been convicted of "providing material support for terrorism," and have sentences ranging from 30 to 70 years. These are decades longer sentences than both the organizers of the January 6th coup attempt and child sex trafficker Ghislane Maxwell. A ninth defendant who was not at the protest has been sentenced to thirty years for moving copies of leftwing zines, not dissimilar to the flyer you are currently reading.

The case is overtly political. The judicial institutions—whose myth of impartiality is their primary claim to

legitimacy—explicitly stated and demonstrated rightwing political motives in rulings, convictions, and sentencing. This is the latest step in a process to provide official sanction to the right-wing political violence that the state already functionally supports which matters because it enables and endorses escalation. The judicial organs of the state are endorsing the mass political violence of the ICE concentration camps by demonstrating they will imprison anyone associated with resistance to that violence.

The public should abandon their regard to any of these institutions as legitimate. Corporate media will continue to redirect to unchallenging stories of incompetent remodels. Liberals will continue to condemn the latest human rights abuses in election season, and then ensure the abuses are well funded once elected. The continuation of concentration camps, erosion of civil rights, genocides abroad, and increased political oppression are not controversial between the parties. Kamala promised to be harder on immigration than Trump; Rob Sand endorses ICE by declining to condemn even their most violent excesses; the image above is from the Obama administration. Voting for these ghouls supports this violence the same as voting for Trump and provides it with critical

legitimacy. If you support political movements that advocate providing pillows in concentration camps instead of destroying those camps, you are complicit in the evil. You must find, build, or support a completely different path.

Revolutionaries should reexamine their strategy and tactics in the face of this increasing dimension to state violence. The state is using the thinnest strings of association to imprison their ideological enemies. Rats and snitches are still the main weakness of movements to the legal system. Clarify your objectives as an individual or organization and reinforce your security culture appropriately. Build trust and connection with comrades—share your lives to make betrayal unthinkable. Do not offer trust freely, but build it with time and shared endeavors.

Taking a shot at the establishment without dual power, huge organization, or some significant leverage is closer to martyrdom than true strategy. Brave, but suicidal and ineffectual. Martyrdom can sometimes seem the only available option in the face of the seemingly insurmountable evil of the US, but we need revolutionaries to share the sometimes hard and slow task of building power to create opportunity for historically significant bravery. ■



## Des Moines People's Pride 2026

*Des Moines only no cops and no corporations Pride!*

BY SUBCOMANDANTE AMENAZA Y SUBCOMANDANTE RONNIE

On Saturday, June 20th, Des Moines Mutual Aid and The Des Moines Abolition Coalition (ceasefire still barely holding) tabled together for the 4th annual Des Moines Peoples Pride, an event we look forward to all year. It is a locally organized Pride that is free of corporate influence and the pigs. It is a Pride for and of the People. This year it was held in the heart of the Drake neighborhood on 24th street in front of XBK, as well as inside both XBK venues. The event was youth-friendly and free to attend.

The core of the event was the vendors consisting of independent artists of many mediums and informational booths from orgs like Doll Haus of Knowledge, Common Love DSM, and One Iowa. Inside the venue were events ranging from the Queer Elders' Panel and performances from our homies, The Theys and The Thems, and others. After hours was The People's Ball featuring a drag show, and Vogue history, lessons, and contests, and followed by a dance party. And not a single damn corporation in sight.

Police were not allowed or invited, unlike Capital City Pride, where they are celebrated and even featured in the parade, barf. Instead there was a security team organized by the event, The Sequeerity, who were friendly and very much a part of the event, not an occupying force looming over us.

We hosted an Abolitionist propaganda booth slinging copies of the monthly and our zines. We spent most of our time talking to attendees about our work and getting feedback from them. We also admired the amazing amount of creative clothing, shoutout heels! Of note, there was a couple from LA in the city visiting family, who stumbled across the event heading to a nearby restaurant. They were very pleasantly surprised to find the event and an org like ours doing mutual aid work with prisoners. A common theme from visitors to our booth was that work with prisoners is very important and tragically overlooked.

We love this event and hope to see it continue. We will continue to attend as long as the ceasefire holds with the Abolition Coalition.

Fire to the corporate Pride, Power to the People's Pride! ■

# Destroy All Traitors

BY SEKOU ODINGA, KUWASI BALAGOON, JUDY CLARK, DAVID GILBERT, SILVIA BARALDIN

*This joint statement appeared in Let your motto be.. Resistance (No.4) July 1982, published by the Coalition to Defend the October 20th Freedom Fighters.*

The government is bringing forward its dirty snitches and traitors in the current RICO trial. Dealing with traitors has been a paramount issue for all revolutionary movements: from Vietnam to Che's group in the mountains of Bolivia; from the traitorous assassination of Amilcar Cabral to the guerrilla war in El Salvador today; from the streets of Belfast to occupied Palestine. In the four hundred-year struggle of New Afrikans for self-determination and human rights, traitors have always been a key weapon for the rulers to smash righteous rebellions by the oppressed.

Traitors have been a cancerous presence in the proletarian and anti-imperialist movements within the oppressor nation.

Traitors and snitches are universally hated and vilified in all people's cultures because of the harm they do and their total violation of all standards of human decency. For example, look at Tyrone Rison.\* Here is a person who turned on the movement that gave him dignity and life. He readily betrays the ideals and aspirations that he once loudly proclaimed. He has become a willing tool for the government that—as he so often stated—is responsible for the murders of Black children in Atlanta. He works to destroy the movement that provides the only promise for self-respect and liberty for his children, for his children who now face the legacy of a father who turned

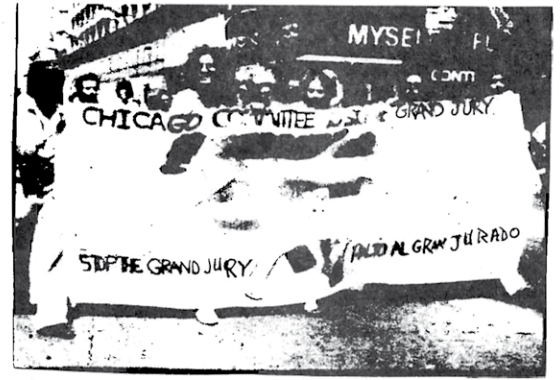
traitor. This man has become a bootlicker and a base liar without a shred of morality.

The government's purposes in displaying and promoting such despicable characters go beyond the effort to convict specific individuals in particular court cases. Their main purpose is to discredit and dehumanize the New Afrikan Independence Movement. In particular, they want to destroy the armed movements by piercing the shield of clandestinity, attacking the morale of freedom fighters, and creating fear that anyone who joins the ranks could be betrayed. This is the reason for their lie that Rison was a leader. They also want to drive a wedge between the masses of people and the revolutionary movements; the emergence of traitors and the line they project are designed to produce cynicism and distrust towards revolution.

The government is also trying to create a culture of snitches, create a situation where traitors are seen as commonplace and it becomes acceptable to large sectors of the population. It is a way to make people accept and participate in their own oppression. By far the greatest damage of traitors is how they are used to undermine the very spirit and fiber of the movements.

Traitors are a product not only of the power of the state but also of the penetration and internalization of imperialism's values. The traitor displays the worst forms of individualism, corruption, and contempt for oppressed people. The proliferation of traitors exposes serious political weaknesses within the ranks which must be corrected.

Our goals in dealing with traitors go beyond



**RESIST!**  
**DON'T COLLABORATE!**  
**STOP Grand Jury Terrorism**  
**PROTECT OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS!**

legalism and the needs of individuals. The paramount issue is the character and integrity of the movements we are building. We must confront, vilify, and destroy traitors at every opportunity; deal with them as the dehumanized vipers that they are; instill "the greater fear." The political terms must always be clear: discredit and destroy all traitors.

To minimize the development of traitors we must build movements based on clear principles, deep politicization, a strong commitment to oppressed and exploited peoples. We must struggle for collectivity and show that there is a scientific strategy to defeat imperialism. Would-be traitors should know that they will be destroyed. We must teach that the state is our implacable enemy and fight for total noncollaboration as a basic principle. Such movements can also spearhead a broader people's culture that reviles traitors and snitches and that builds on strong principles, human values, and collective commitment. ■

*\* Tyrone Rison was an organizer in the New Afrikan Independence Movement and an alleged associate of the Black Liberation Army (BLA). He turned snitch and testified in the infamous Brink's Bank Robbery Trial.*

# Landlords Don't Create Wealth—They Extract It



BY COMRADE BETSY

Landlords occupy a uniquely parasitic position in the economy. Unlike workers, they derive income not by producing goods or performing labor, but through ownership of property. This allows them to extract wealth from the working class simply because they control access to something everyone needs; shelter. Today, we're looking at one Des Moines landlord whose recent disputes with tenants have attracted public scrutiny: Joe Cordaro.

Cordaro's property at 3523 6th Avenue in Highland Park has seen two businesses close in rapid succession. One local plant shop shut down abruptly amid rumors of health and safety concerns in the building, including alleged mold exposure. More recently, a local craft store owner publicly documented her experience leasing space from Cordaro.

Her lease was signed in February 2025. However, in March 2026, building tenants received a year-end reconciliation showing operating expenses had effectively doubled. The increase stemmed from a property tax hike received after historic preservation tax credits expired, credits that had already expired before she signed the lease and were known to the landlord.

Faced with unexpected backcharges amounting to thousands of dollars, she chose to void her lease and close the shop by the end of August. She continued paying the rent and operating expenses along with a 5% increase, but disputed the deceptive retroactive charges. When she attempted to pay June's rent, the online payment portal would not allow payment unless the disputed balance was included. After Cordaro declined partial payment, she was served with a notice of delinquency. The following day, she mailed a certified check for the undisputed rent amount, which was never cashed. Soon

afterward, she received a notice to quit, and eviction proceedings followed. At the time of writing, the case is pending.

This is not the first time Cordaro's properties have drawn public scrutiny. He also owned the Argonne Apartments in Des Moines, where residents described years of deteriorating conditions, including broken elevators, poor maintenance, and more than 100 building code violations. One resident described breaking her leg and being forced to crawl up and down the stairs because the elevator remained inoperable. City inspectors ultimately determined the building posed serious fire hazards, ordering it vacated and displacing 30 families.

Capitalists argue that rental income to landlords is justified because they assume the financial risk and provide housing or commercial space through maintenance and investment. We know this isn't true—many public subsidies and tax incentives reduce that initial risk, landlords often let their properties fall into disrepair, and tenants bear the consequences when maintenance is neglected or costs are shifted onto them. Landlords get rich off working people's money by raising rents year after year and pricing residents out of their neighborhoods, all while benefiting from a system that protects deceitful and unethical behavior.

Not content to leech off his tenants alone, Cordaro also benefited from programs such as Invest DSM and historic preservation tax credits in acquiring and renovating the Highland Park property. Yet, tenants have experienced unexpected cost increases, aggressive efforts to remove businesses that challenged those charges, and potentially unsafe building conditions. At the same time, the property has recently been listed for sale at \$1.8 million—well above its assessed value—showing a commitment to extraction and capital accumulation rather than any sort of support for the community. After sucking his tenants and public programs dry, Cordaro wants to depart the neighborhood and find new victims elsewhere.

Ultimately, Joe Cordaro's conduct is not unique among landlords, but he is an instructive example reflecting the incentives built into the system itself. When profit depends on extracting as much rent as possible while minimizing costs, tenants become nothing but revenue streams. Whether through deferred maintenance, deceptive lease terms, or aggressive legal tactics, the burden is shifted onto the people who actually create value through their work. The issue is larger than any one landlord; it is a system that rewards ownership over labor and treats the basic need for shelter as an opportunity for profit. ■



*This QR code links to our website, where you can read past editions of the monthly, learn more about our community outreach programs, and support our work. Donations fund direct aid for unhoused campers, our bail fund, and other mutual aid efforts. You'll also find links to other mutual aid networks across Iowa, including the Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund, DSM Abolition Coalition, and organizations serving communities throughout the state.*

*In solidarity, and thanks for reading.*

*— Your DMMA comrades*

*In Loving Memory of Comrades KT and Gary*