

"The Strike": Witness the Untold Story of a Movement for Change Within Prison Walls

Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker Proudly Announces the Bay Area Premiere of "The Strike" at DocLands Film Festival

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker is thrilled to announce the Bay Area premiere of the impactful documentary, "The Strike," set to screen at the upcoming DocLands Film Festival. This compelling film, directed by JoeBill Munoz and Lucas Guilkey, will be shown on Saturday, May 4th at the prestigious Rafael Film Center in San Rafael, California.

"The Strike" is a poignant exploration of the 2013 hunger strike by 30,000 California prisoners, which aimed to protest and ultimately reform the practices of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons. This 86-minute documentary delves deep into the lives and struggles of inmates at Pelican Bay State Prison, shedding light on the harsh realities of long-term isolation and the broader implications on human rights within the correctional system.



Courtesy of Lucas Guilkey



MinisterKingXPyeface advocating for the release of the signatories to the AEH

JoeBill Muñoz, a Texas-born Mexican-American filmmaker, brings his rich background in directing

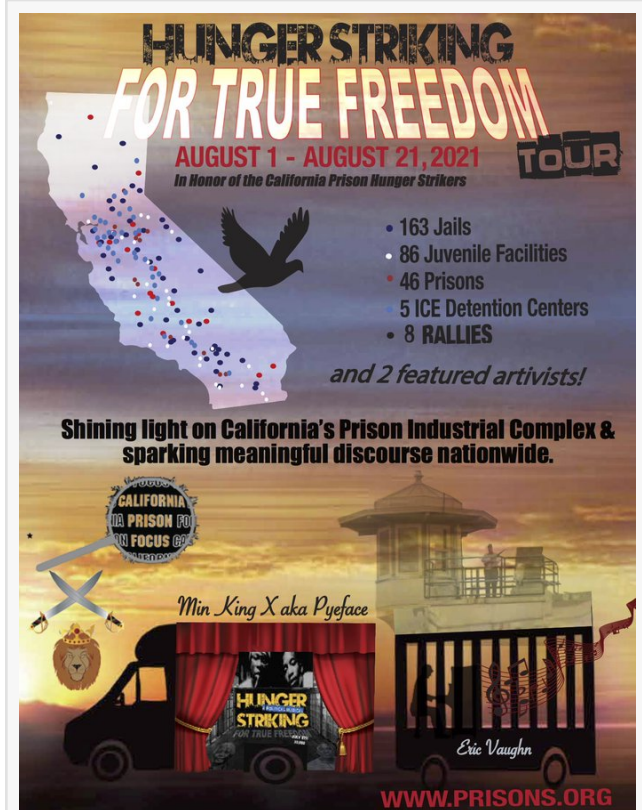
both short films and producing feature documentaries to "The Strike." His works often explore profound social issues, as seen in his various projects supported by institutions like the Sundance Institute and the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.

Lucas Guilkey, an Oakland-based documentary filmmaker and journalist, joins Muñoz in this endeavor. Guilkey's career has been marked by a commitment to social justice storytelling, evident in his previous documentaries such as "What Happened to Dajuan Armstrong?" and his participation in significant fellowships like the UC Berkeley Investigative Reporting Program.

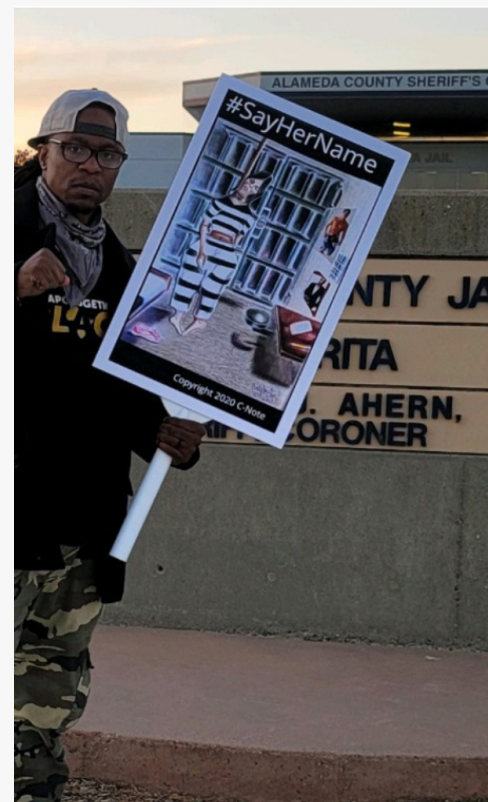
"We set out to try and tell, not a definitive story about the California hunger strikes and solitary confinement because that would require volumes of books, but as close to that as we could," Muñoz tells Variety in an April, Hot Docs interview, "'The Strike,' About the Fight Against Solitary Confinement in California, Debuts Trailer (EXCLUSIVE)."

One such notables not fully explored in the documentary was the role of the Bay Area prisoner press, like the California Prison Focus Newspaper, the San Francisco Bay View Newspaper, and Poor Magazine. Beginning in 1989, the California Prison Focus began as the Pelican Bay Information Project. It was a pre-internet newsletter, and the first publication having an on the ground presence into the activities of the California supermax prison. California Prison Focus became a quarterly print publication, and later, a digital publication as well.

Likewise, the San Francisco Bay View is a monthly print publication, as well as a digital publication. It kept a close monitoring of the situation at Pelican Bay through their "Behind Enemy Lines," section; while Poor Magazine's purchase of PNN-KEXU radio allowed former Pelican Bay prisoner Joey Villareal to broadcast Pelican Bay Plantation prison



Hunger Striking for True Freedom Tour (digital flyer)



MinisterKingXPyeface holding a C-Note #SayHerName protest poster in front of the Alameda County Santa Rita Jail

poverty skola reporter/commentary on a weekly basis.

In 2006, the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation created the Pelican Bay Short Corridor. It was a security housing unit within the security housing unit to house shot-callers in an attempt of disrupting their communication with underlings, and for these ethnic and gang rivals to eliminate one another.

What had occurred was the opposite. They joined together like a band of brothers, and would initiate a hunger strike on July 1, 2011. This would be the first of two hunger strikes in 2011, culminating in the third hunger strike in 2013, of 30,000 California prisoners highlighted in the documentary "The Strike."



MinisterKingXPyeface with Sitawa Jamaa on the day of release, after serving 43 years in prison

One of the most significant prison reform changes that had come organically from those housed in the Short Corridor was the 2012, Agreement to End Hostilities (AEH). An agreement by the leaders of every race, ethnic group, or gang leadership housed in the Short Corridor to have their members end their hostilities with one another. This 2012 agreement, as noted in an Oct. 21, 2020, California Herald article, "[Former Prisoner-Playwright Finds Ex-Felon Voting Ally in Progressive Senator](#)," was the most significant racial and gang truce in the history of California, on par with the 1998 Northern Ireland Good Friday Peace Accords.

This California prisoner on prisoner violence truce in 2012, would lead to the coming together of 30,000 solitary confinement and general population prisoners to create the largest prisoner hunger strike in US history. It should be noted, the AEH excluded any prisoners housed in some form of protective custody.

As Kim Pollak, editor-in-chief of the California Prison Focus would write, "It was 30,000 gang members that ended long-term solitary confinement in California." The vast majority of the 30,000 hunger strikers were general population prisoners throughout the Department of Corrections, who were housed nowhere near Pelican Bay and enjoyed all the creature comforts afforded to prisoners, who were programing.

To convince this population, who had no dog in the fight to end the long-term solitary confinement at Pelican Bay was no easy sell. In 2011, before the first hunger strike, MinisterKingXPyeface began to organize the general population prisoners at Corcoran State

Prison (CSP), to be prepared to go on a hunger strike for those housed in long-term solitary confinement at Pelican Bay. The catalyst for his organizing was news reports he was reading in the San Francisco Bay View.

One prisoner MinisterKingXPyeface had an impact on before the first hunger strike was a Crip out of Los Angeles by the name of C-Note. In "[My 10 Year Prison Journey After the Agreement to End All Hostilities](#)," C-Note would write, "I first experienced the effects of the AEH when it came to a different buzz or vibe surrounding an upcoming hunger strike. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, in 2011, 85% of the prisoners housed in the PBSP SHU were Mexican-Americans. This traditional disparity had greatly impacted Black prisoners' interest in participating in the two previous hunger strikes for those of us not in the SHU, but were being housed in the general population. Amongst the Blacks, the mindset was not to participate in the hunger strikes to end long-term solitary confinement, as it was a, 'That's them,' meaning that's a Mexican issue. This time the buzz, and organizational structure around this new hunger strike were different. Blacks were buying in."

On September 1, 2015, a settlement agreement was made between Todd Ashker, a signatory to the AEH, and the governor of California to end indeterminate solitary confinement in prisons throughout California, (TODD ASHKER, et al., Plaintiffs, v. GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, et al., Defendants, No. C 09-05796 CW, United States District Court, N.D. California).

The AEH had allowed California correctional officials to become comfortable letting in art and higher educational programs to come inside the prisons, giving C-Note the opportunity to become known as the world's most prolific prison artist. His 2017 drawing, "Incarceration Nation," an advertisement for the Aug. 19, 2017, "Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March," on Washington DC, nationally and internationally and endorsed by the National Lawyers Guild has been featured in many digital and print publications, including on the front page of the California Prison Focus, Vol. 52.

In 2021, during the Coronavirus pandemic, when museums and art galleries were closed to the public, "Incarceration Nation," had a Bay Area viewing on a South Bay billboard. "Look Up!," curated by Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker made C-Note the first prison artist to have one of their works to be featured on a billboard.

In July of 2019, having spent six years in federal prison and 18 years in the California prison system, including the Pelican Bay and CSP long-term solitary confinement housing units, MinisterKingXPyeface was released from prison. He immediately began organizing in society writ large for the release of those prisoners who were the strategic thinkers and signatories to the AEH. Many of them were now old men.

He became co-director of the California Prison Focus and was arrested in 2021 during a rally at Ruchell Magee's Parole Board hearing. Magee was released in 2023, and later died that same

year, had become California's longest serving political prisoner. MinisterKingXPyeface, who was on parole at the time of the rally, was accused by prison officials of being on the prison grounds, and being a member of a Black Extremist Identity group. The Facebook live video MinisterKingXPyeface made had debunked the allegations he was on the prison grounds, and the community outrage of accusing him of being a member of a Black Extremist Identity group had backfired on the prison officials.

Mary Ratcliff, along with her husband, owners of the San Francisco Bay View hired Richard Tan to represent MinisterKingXPyeface in court. In a packed courtroom full of supporters, all charges were immediately dropped at arraignment, even his parole officer didn't buy the prison officials' version, and did not violate his parole.

In prison, MinisterKingXPyeface promoted peace; that didn't sit well with the prison officials. In the early 2000s, he founded KAGE Brothers, Kings Against Genocidal Environments. Later, it would mean Kings & Queens Against Genocidal Environments. Today, KAGE Universal is everywhere, including providing curriculum to K-12 students.

In the March-April, 2017 edition, of the prison news publication, Under Lock and Key, it published an announcement that the group United Kings Against Genocidal Environments (KAGE) was pursuing a legal case in the U.S. District Court (WILLIAM E. BROWN, Plaintiff, v..R. AMIS, et al., Defendants, Case No. 16-cv-00603-HSG (PR), United States District Court, N.D. California). The lawsuit challenges the decision by the Chaplain and another official at Pelican Bay State Prison to shut down KAGE's P.E.A.C.E program, despite it being recognized as a religious activity group. The announcement seeks supporting evidence from prisoners who were affected by this closure.

Under Lock and Key had found it ironic that a prison chaplain would oppose a program promoting peace, implying that officials might perceive efforts to reduce violence as a threat to a system potentially reliant on repeat incarceration. Under Lock and Key is another Bay Area prison news publication. It has a monthly print publication, as well as publishing digitally.

On July 26, 2021, California Prison Focus editor-in-chief Kim Pollak in a press release announced, "The Hunger Striking for True Freedom Tour," a project of California Prison Focus/KAGE Universal (CPF/KAGE) that would consist of a caravan of mostly formerly incarcerated activists, including two featured artists and a prison cell on wheels with a piano in it. The tour would last for 21 days, passing by many of California's more than 300 federal, state, county and ICE detention facilities, with multiple organized rallies and interactive art exhibit/tabling/pop-ups along the way.

"The tour is being organized in solidarity with and in honor of social justice organizers who remain in prison today for no more than their efforts to create a better world for their children," stated Pollak. "Including our elders who were instrumental in the organizing of the California Prison Hunger Strikes of 2011, 2012 and 2013 - who starved themselves for 60 days to liberate themselves from decades of torture in Pelican Bay State Prison's long term solitary confinement

units (PBSP SHU)."

The tour began a special Bay Area tour on August 1st, at 8:30 a.m. that brought pop-up protests to the 15 Bay Area detention facilities that hold +15000.

California Prison Focus/KAGE Universal have been salient in creating a national movement to "Liberate Our Elders." For MinisterKingXPyeface it's personal. He has been on the forefront of working towards the release of the signatories to the Agreement to End Hostilities.

In February of 2024 (Black History Month), after serving 40 years of incarceration, thirty of which was in solitary confinement, signatory to the AEH, Sitawa Jamaa was given a compassionate release.

"The Strike," its Bay Area premier, screens at 7:15 p.m., Saturday, May 4th, at Smith Rafael Film Center, 1118 Fourth St., San Rafael, California.

Tickets are:

\$16.50 GENERAL

\$14 MEMBERS

\$15 SENIOR (65+)

\$8 STUDENTS w/ ID & YOUTH (12 & under)

at www.doclands.com/strike/ or (415) 454-1222.

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Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker, located in Silicon Valley, operates under the trademarked motto "Fine Art needs a Home and a Home needs Fine Art®." This firm is a prominent art advisory and brokerage entity specializing in contemporary Underground art. It also offers real estate services related to buying and selling commercial or residential properties in Silicon Valley. As the publisher of the "2023 Underground Art Market Report", Anna D. Smith has earned the title "Queen of the Underground Art World" and has developed her firm into a respected entity in both art and real estate, noted for expertise, professionalism, and client satisfaction. Her website includes a blog where she shares insights on real estate and Underground contemporary art, discussing luxury real estate, the art market, NFTs, and more. She has also curated art exhibitions and sells over 200 prints or originals by California prison artist Donald "C-Note" Hooker.

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